

It is promised that God's people shall be blessings to the world as *corn* and *wine* are. And a very great and valuable mercy it is to be serviceable to our generation. Comfort and honour attend it.

8. Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him*, and observed him: I *am* like a green fir-tree, from me *is* thy fruit found. 9. Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things*? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

1. Concerning Ephraim; he is spoken of, and spoken to, *ver. 8.* (1.) Here is his repentance and reformation. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* As some read it, God here reasons and argues with him, why he should renounce idolatry, *O Ephraim, What to me and idols?* What concord or agreement can there be between me and idols? What communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial, 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, therefore thou must break off thy league with them, if thou wilt come in to covenant with me. As we read it God promised to bring Ephraim and keep him to this, *Ephraim shall say*, God will put it into his heart to say it; *What have I to do any more with idols?* he had promised, *ver. 3.* not to *say any more to the works of his hands, ye are my Gods*; but God's promises to us are much more our security and our strength for the mortifying of sin than our promises to God; and therefore God himself is here *surely* for his servant to good, will put it into his heart, and into his mouth. And whatever good we say or do at any time, it is he that works it in us; Ephraim had solemnly engaged not to call his idols *his gods*; but God here engageth further for him, that he shall resolve to have *no more to do with them*; he shall *abolish* them, he shall *abandon* them, and that with the utmost detestation; for it is necessary not only that in our lives we be turned from sin, but that in our hearts we be turned against sin. See here (1.) *The power of divine grace*; Ephraim had been *joined to idols*, chap. iv. 17. was so fond of them, that one would have thought he could never have fallen out with them, and yet God will work such a change in him, that he shall *lothe* them as much as ever he *loved* them. (2.) See the benefit of *sanctified afflictions*. Ephraim had smarted for his idolatry, it had brought one judgment after another upon him. and this at length is the fruit, even the *taking away of his sin*, Isa. xxvii. 9. (3.) See the *nature of repentance*, it is a firm and fixed resolution to have *no more to do with sin*; this is the language of a penitent; I am ashamed that ever I had to do with sin, but I have had enough of it, I hate it, and by the grace of God I will never have any thing to do with it again; no not with the occasions of it. Thou shalt say to thine idol, *Get thee hence*, Isa. xxx. 32. shall say to the tempter, *Get thee behind me Satan*.

(2.) Here is the gracious notice God is pleased to take of it. *I have heard him and observed him; I have heard, and will look upon him*. So some read it. Note. The God of heaven takes cognizance of the penitent reflections and resolutions of returning sinners. He expects and desires the repentance of sinners, because he has no pleasure in their ruin; *He looks upon men*, Job xxxiii. 27, *hearkens and hears*, Jer. viii. 6. And if there be any disposition to repent he is well pleased with it; when *Ephraim bemoans himself* before God, he is a *dear son*, he is a *pleasant child*, Jer. xxxi. 20. He meets penitence with mercy, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son. God *observed Ephraim*, to see whether he would bring forth fruits meet for this profession of repentance that he made; and whether he would continue in this good mind. He *observed* him, to do him good, and comfort him, according to the exigencies of his case.

(3.) Here is the mercy God designed for him, in order to his comfort, and perseverance in his resolutions; still God will be all in all to him; be-

fore Israel was compared to a tree, now God compares himself to one. He will be to his people, (1.) As the branches of a tree. *I am like a green fir-tree*, and will be so to thee. The fir-trees in those countries were exceeding large and thick, and a shelter against sun and rain; God will be to all true converts both a delight and a defence; under his protection and influence they shall both dwell in safety, and dwell at ease. He will be either a *sun* and a *shield*, or a *shade* and *shield*, according as their case requires. They shall sit down under his *shadow with delight*, Cant. ii. 3. he will be for all weathers, Isa. iv. 6. (2.) As the root of a tree. *From me is thy fruit found*. Which may be understood either of the fruit brought forth to us, to him we owe all our comforts. Or of the fruit brought forth by us, from him we receive grace and strength to enable us to do our duty. Whatever fruits of righteousness we bring forth, all the praise of them is owing to God; for he works in us both to will and to do that which is good.

2. Concerning every one that hears and reads the words of the prophecy of this book, *ver. 9.* *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?* Perhaps the prophet was wont to conclude the sermons he preached with these words; and now he closeth the whole book with them in which he had committed to writing some fragments of the many sermons he had preached. Observe,

1. The character of those that do profit by the truths he delivered. *Who is wise and prudent?* He shall *understand these things*, he shall *know them*; those that set themselves to *understand and know* these things, thereby make it to appear that they are truly *wise and prudent*; and will thereby be made more so; add if any do not *understand and know* them, it is because they are *foolish and unwise*. Those that are *wise* in the doing of their duty, that are prudent in practical religion, they are most likely to *know and understand* both the truths and providences of God, which are a mystery to others. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*, Psal. xxv. 14. *Who is wise?* This intimates a desire that those who read and hear these things would understand them; *O that they were wise!* And a complaint that few were so, *Who has believed our report?*

2. The excellency of the things concerning which we are here instructed. *The ways of the Lord are right*; and therefore it is our wisdom and duty to *know and understand* them. The way of God's precepts in which he requires us to walk is *right*, agreeing with the rules of eternal reason and equity, and having a direct tendency to our eternal felicity. The ways of God's providence in which he walks towards us are all *right*; no fault is to be found with any thing that God doth, for it is all well done. His judgments upon the impenitent, his favours to the penitent, they are all *right*; however they may be perverted and misinterpreted, God will at last be justified and glorified in them all; his *ways are equal*.

3. The different use which men make of them.

1. The *right ways* of God to those that are good are, and will be a favour of life unto life; *The just shall walk in them*, they shall conform to the will of God both in his precepts and in his providences; and shall have the comfort of so doing. They shall well understand the mind of God, both in his word and in his works, and shall be well reconciled to both, and shall accommodate themselves to God's intention in both. *The just shall walk in those ways* towards their great end, and shall not come short of it.

2. The right ways of God to those that are wicked will be a favour of death unto death. *The transgressors shall fall* not only in their own wrong ways, but even in the *right ways of the Lord*. Christ that is a foundation stone to some, is to others a *stone of stumbling* and a *rock of offence*. That which was *ordained to life*, through their abuse of it becomes death to them. God's providences being not duly improved by them, harden them in sin, and contribute to their ruin: God's discovery of himself both in the judgments of his mouth, and in the judgments of his hand, is to us according as we are affected under it, *recipitur ad modum recipientis*, the same sun fosters wax and hardens clay. But of all transgressors those certainly have the most dangerous fatal falls, that fall in the *ways of God*, that split on the rock of ages, and suck poison out of the balm of Gilead. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid of this.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET HOSEA.

AN

## EXPOSITION,

WITH

## PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

# JOEL.

WE are altogether uncertain concerning the time when this prophet prophesied; it is probable it was about the same time that Amos prophesied, not for the reason that the rabbins give, because Amos begins his prophecy with that wherewith Joel concludes his; *the Lord shall roar out of Zion*: but for the reason Dr. Lightfoot gives, because he speaks of the same judgments of locusts, and drought, and fire, that Amos laments, which is an intimation that they appeared about the same time, Amos in Israel, and Joel in Judah. Hosea and Obadiah prophesied about the same time; and it appears that Amos prophesied in the days of Jeroboam the second king of Israel, Amos vii. 10. God sent variety of prophets that they might strengthen the hands one of another, and out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established. In this prophecy, (1.) The desolation made by hosts of noxious insects is described, chap. i. and part of chap. ii. (2.) The people are hereupon called to repentance, chap. ii. (3.) Promises are made of the return of mercy upon their repentance, chap. ii. and promises of the pouring out the Spirit in the latter days. (4.) The cause of God's people is pleaded against their enemies, whom God would in due time reckon with, chap. iii. and glorious things are spoken of the gospel Jerusalem and of the prosperity and perpetuity of it.



## CHAP. I.

*This chapter is the description of a lamentable devastation made of the country of Judah by locusts and caterpillars; some think the prophet speaks of it as a thing to come, and gives warning of it before hand, as usually the prophets did of judgments coming. Others think it was now present, and his business is to affect the people with it, and awaken them by it to repentance. (1.) It is spoken of as a judgment which there was no precedent of it in former ages, ver. 1—7. (2.) All sorts of people sharing in the calamity are called upon to lament it, ver. 8—13. (3.) They are directed to look up to God in their lamentations, and to humble themselves before him, ver. 14—20.*

1. **T**HE word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. 2. Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? 3. Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. 4. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten. 5. Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. 6. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. 7. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree; he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.

It is a foolish fancy which some of the Jews have, that this Joel the prophet was the same with that Joel that was the son of Samuel, 1 Sam. viii. 2. yet one of their rabbins very gravely undertakes to shew why Samuel is here called Pethuel. This Joel was long after that. He here speaks of a sad and sore judgment which was now brought or to be brought upon Judah for their sins. Observe,

1. The greatness of the judgment; expressed here in two things. (1.) It was such as could not be paralleled in the ages that were past; in history, or in the memory of any living, ver. 2. The old men are appealed to, who could remember what had happened long ago; nay, and all the inhabitants of the land are called on to testify, if they could any of them remember the like. Let them go further than any man's memory, and prepare themselves for the search of their fathers. (Job viii. 8.) and they would not find an account of the like in any record. Note, Those that outdo their predecessors in sin, may justly expect to fall under greater and sorer judgments than any their predecessors knew. (2.) It was such as would not be forgotten in the ages to come, ver. 3. Tell ye your children of it, let them know what dismal tokens of the wrath of God you have been under, that they may take warning, and may learn obedience by the things which you have suffered, for it is designed for warning to them also. Yea, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation; let them tell it not only as a strange thing, which may serve for matter of talk, as such uncommon accidents are recorded in our almanacks, it is so long since the plague, and fire, so long since the great frost, and the great wind, but let them tell it to teach their children to stand in awe of God, and of his judgments, and to tremble before him. Note, we ought to transmit to posterity the memorial of God's judgments as well as of his mercies.

2. The judgment itself; it is an invasion of the country of Judea by a great army. Many interpreters, both ancient and modern, understand it of armies of men: the forces of the Assyrians, that under Sennacherib took all the fenced cities of Judah, and then, no doubt, made havock of the country, and destroyed the products of it; nay, some make the four sorts of animals here named, ver. 4. to signify the four monarchies, which in their turns were oppressive to the people of the Jews, one destroying what had escaped the fury of the other. Many of the Jewish expositors think it is a parabolical expression of the coming of enemies, and their multitude to lay all waste. So the Chaldee paraphrast mentions these animals here, ver. 4. But afterwards, chap. ii. 25. puts instead of them, Nations, peoples, tongues, languages, potentates, and revenging kingdoms. But it seems much rather to be understood literally of armies of insects coming upon the land, and eating up the fruits of it. Locusts were one of the plagues of Egypt, of them it is said there were never any like them nor should be, Exod. x. 14. None such as those in Egypt, none such as these in Judah; none like those locusts for bigness, none like these for multitude, and the mischief they did: that lasted but for a few days, this here seems to have continued for four years successively, as some think, because here are four sorts of insects mentioned, ver. 4. one destroying what the other left. But others think they came all in one year. We are not told in the history of the Old Testament when this happened, but we are sure no word of God fell to the ground; and though a devastation by these insects is primarily intended here, yet it is expressed in such language as is very applicable to the destruction of the country by a foreign enemy invading it, because if the people were not humbled and reformed by that lesser judgment which devoured the land God would send this greater upon them which would devour the inhabitants; and by the description of that they are bid to take it for a warning. If this nation of worms doth not reduce them, another nation shall come to ruin them.

Observe, 1. What these animals are that are sent against them, locusts, and caterpillars, palmer-worms, and canker-worms, ver. 4. We cannot now describe how these differed one from another, they were all little insects, any one of them despicable, and which a man might easily crush with his foot or with his finger; but when they came in vast swarms or shoals of them they were very terrible, and eat up all before them. Note, God is Lord of hosts, has all creatures at his command, and when he pleaseth can humble and mortify a proud and rebellious people by the weakest and most contemptible creatures. Man is said to be a worm, and by this it appears he is less than a worm, for when God pleaseth, worms are too hard for him, plunder his country, eat up that for which he laboured, destroy the forage and out off the subsistence of a potent nation. The weaker the instrument is that God employs, the more is his power magnified. (2.) What force and fury they came with. They are here called a nation, ver. 6. because they are embodied, and act by consent, and as it were with a common design, for though the locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands,

Prov. xxx. 27. and it is there mentioned as an instance of their wisdom. It is prudence for those that are weak severally to unite and act jointly. They are strong, for they are without number. The small dust of the balance is light and easily blown away, but a heap of dust is weighty; so a worm can do little, (yet one worm served to wither Jonah's gourd) but numbers of them can do wonders. They are said to have the teeth of a lion, because of the great and terrible execution they do. Note, Locusts become as lions, when they come armed with a divine commission. We read of the locusts out of the bottomless pit, that their teeth were as the teeth of lions, Rev. ix. 8. (3.) What mischief they do. They eat up all before them, ver. 4. What one leaves, the other devours: they destroy not only the grass and corn, but the trees, ver. 7. The vine is laid waste. These vermin eat the leaves which should be a shelter to the fruit while it ripens, and so that all perishesth and cometh to nothing. They eat the very bark of the fig-tree, and so kill it. Thus the fig-tree doth not blossom, nor is their fruit in the vine.

3. A call to the drunkards to lament this judgment, ver. 5. Awake and weep all ye drinkers of wine. This intimates, (1.) That they should suffer very sensibly by this calamity, it should touch them in a tender part, the new wine which they loved so well should be cut off from their mouth. Note, It is just with God to take away those comforts which are abused to luxury and excess, to recover the corn and wine which is prepared for food, which is made the food and fuel of a base lust. And to them judgments of that kind are most grievous. The more men place their happiness in the gratifications of sense, the more pressing temporal afflictions are upon them. The drinkers of water needed not to care when the vine was laid waste, they could live as well without it as they had done, it was no trouble to the Nazarites; but the drinkers of wine will weep and howl. The more delights we make necessary to our satisfaction, the more we expose ourselves to trouble and disappointment. (2.) It intimates that they had been very senseless and stupid under the former tokens of God's displeasure; and therefore they are here called to awake and weep. They that will not be roused out of their security by the word of God shall be roused by his rod; that will not be startled by judgments at a distance, shall be themselves arrested by them; and when they are going to take of the forbidden fruit, a prohibition of another nature shall come between the cup and the lip, and cut off the wine from their mouth.

8. ¶ Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. 9. The meat-offering and the drink-offering is cut off from the house of the LORD: the priests, the LORD's ministers, mourn. 10. The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. 11. Be ye ashamed, O ye Husbandmen; howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. 12. The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men. 13. Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests; howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God.

The judgment is here described as very lamentable, and such as all sorts of people should share in; it shall not only rob the drunkards of their pleasure; if that were the worst of it, it might be the better borne, but it shall deprive others of their necessary subsistence, who are therefore called to lament, ver. 8. as a virgin laments the death of her lover, to whom she was espoused, but not completely married, yet so as that he was in effect her husband; or, as a young woman lately married, from whom the husband of her youth, her young husband, or the husband to whom she was married when she was young, is suddenly taken away by death. Betwixt a new-married couple that are young, that married for love, and that are every way amiable and agreeable to each other, there is great fondness, and consequently great grief if either be taken away. Such lamentation shall there be for the loss of their corn and wine. Note, The more we are wedded to our creature-comforts, the harder it is to part with them. See that parallel place, Isa. xxxii. 10, 11, 12.

Two sorts of people are here brought in, as concerned to lament this devastation, countrymen, and clergymen.

1. Let the husbandmen, and vine-dressers lament, ver. 11. Let them be ashamed of the care and pains they have taken about their vineyards, for it will be all labour lost, and they shall gain no advantage by it; they shall see the fruit of their labour eaten up before their eyes, and shall not be able to save any of it. Note, Those who labour only for the meat that perisheth, will sooner or later be ashamed of their labour. The vine-dressers will then express their extreme grief by howling, when they see their vineyards stripped of leaves and fruit, and the vines withered; so that nothing is to be had or hoped for from them, wherewith they might pay their rent and maintain their families. The destruction is particularly described here; the field is laid waste, ver. 10. all is consumed that it produced. the land mourns, the ground has a melancholy aspect, and looks ruefully: all the inhabitants of the land are in tears for what they have lost, are in fears of perishing for want, Isa. xxiv. 4. Jer. iv. 48. The corn, the bread corn, which is the staff of life, is wasted; the new wine, which should be brought into the cellars for recruits, when the old is drunk, is dried up, is ashamed of having promised so fair what it is not now able to perform: the oil languisheth, or is diminished, because (as the Chaldee renders it) the olives are fallen off. The people were not thankful to God, as they should have been for the bread that strengthens man's heart, the wine that makes glad the heart, and the oil that makes the face to shine, Psalm cxliv. 14, 15, and therefore they are justly brought to lament the loss and want of them; of all the products of the earth which God had given them either for necessity or for delight. This is repeated, ver. 11, 12. The wheat and barley, the two principal grains bread was then made of, wheat for the rich, and of barley for the poor; so that rich and poor meet together in the calamity. The trees are destroyed, not only the vine and the fig-tree, as before, ver. 7. which were more useful and necessary, but other trees also that were for delight; the pomegranate, palm-tree, and apple-tree, yea, all the trees of the field, as well as those of the orchard, timber-trees, as well as fruit-trees. In short, all the harvest of the field is perished, ver. 11. And by this means joy is withered away from the children of men, ver. 11. the joy of harvest, which is used to express



express great and general joy, is come to nothing, is turned into shame, is turned into lamentation. Note, The perishing of the harvest is the withering of the joy of the children of men. Those that place their happiness in the delights of sense, when they are deprived of them, or any way disturbed in the enjoyment of them, lose all their joy; whereas the children of God, that look upon the pleasures of sense with a holy indifference and contempt, and know what it is to make God their hearts delight, can rejoice in him as the God of their salvation, even when the fig tree doth not blossom; spiritual joy is so far from withering then, that it flourisheth more than ever, *Hab. iii. 17, 18.*

Let us see here, (1.) What perishing, uncertain things all our creature comforts are; we can never be sure of the continuance of them. Here the heavens had given their rains in due season, the earth had yielded her strength, and when the appointed weeks of harvest were at hand, they saw no reason to doubt but that they should have a very plentiful crop; yet then they are invaded by these unthought-of enemies, that lay all waste, and not by fire and sword. It is our wisdom not to lay up our treasure in these things which are liable to so many ill accidents. (2.) See what need we have to live in a continual dependence upon God and his providence, for our own hands are not sufficient for us. When we see the full ear in the ear, and think we are sure of it; nay, when we have brought it home, if he blow upon it, nay, if he do not bless it, we are not likely to have any good of it. (3.) See what ruinous work sin makes. A paradise is turned into a wilderness, a fruitful land, the most fruitful land upon earth, into barrenness, for the iniquity of them that dwell therein.

2. Let the priests the Lord's ministers lament, for they share deeply in the calamity. Gird yourselves with sackcloth, *ver. 13.* nay, they do mourn, *ver. 9.* Observe, The priests are called the ministers of the altar, for on that they attended, and the ministers of the Lord, of my God, saith the prophet; for in attending on the altar they served him, did his work, and did him honour. Note, They that are employed in holy things, are therein God's ministers, and on him they attend. The ministers of the altar used to rejoice before the Lord, and spend their time very much in singing; but now they must lament and howl; for the meat-offering and drink-offering was cut off from the house of the Lord, *ver. 9.* and the same again, *ver. 13.* from the house of your God. He is your God in a particular manner, you are in a nearer relation to him than other Israelites are, and therefore it is expected you should be more concerned than others for that which is a hindrance to the service of his sanctuary. It is intimated, (1.) That the people, as long as they had the fruits of the earth brought in in their season, presented to the Lord his dues out of them; and brought the offerings to the altar, and tithes to them that served at the altar. Note, A people may be filling up the measure of their iniquity apace, and yet may keep up a course of external performances in religion. (2.) That when the meat and drink failed, the meat-offering and drink-offering failed of course; and this was the forest instance of the calamity. Note, As far as any public trouble is an obstruction to the course of religion, it is to be upon that account more than any other sadly lamented, especially by the priests the Lord's ministers. As far as poverty occasions the decay of piety, and the neglect of divine offices, and sturves the cause of religion among a people, it is indeed a sore judgment. When the famine prevailed, God could not have his sacrifices, nor could the priests have their maintenance, and therefore let the Lord's ministers mourn.

14. ¶ Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD. 15. Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. 16. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? 17. The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. 18. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. 19. O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. 20. The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

We have observed abundance of tears shed for the destruction of the fruits of the earth by the locusts; now here we have those tears turned into the right channel, that of repentance and humiliation before God; the judgment was very heavy, and here they are directed to own the hand of God in it, his mighty hand, and to humble themselves under it. Here is;

1. A proclamation issued out for a general fast. The priests are ordered to appoint one; they must not only mourn themselves, but they must call upon others to mourn too. Sanctify ye a fast, i. e. Let some time be set apart from all worldly business to be spent in the exercises of religion; in the expressions of repentance, and other extraordinary instances of devotion. Note, Under public judgments there ought to be public humiliations; for by them the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning. With all the marks of sorrow and shame, sin must be confessed and bewailed; the righteousness of God must be acknowledged, and his favour implored. Observe what is to be done by a nation at such a time. (1.) A day is to be appointed for this purpose, a day of restraint, so the margin reads it. A day in which people must be restrained from their other ordinary occasions, that they may the more closely attend God's service; and from all bodily refreshments; for, (2.) It must be a fast, a religious abstaining from meat and drink, farther than is of absolute necessity. The king of Nineveh appointed a fast, in which they were to taste nothing, *Jonah iii. 7.* Hereby we own ourselves unworthy of our necessary food; and that we have forfeited it, and deserve to be wholly deprived of it; we punish ourselves, and mortify the body which has been the occasion of sin; we keep it in a frame fit to serve the soul in serving God; and by the appetite's craving food, the desires of the soul towards that which is better than life and all the supports of it are excited. This was in a special manner seasonable, now God was depriving them of their meat and drink; for hereby they accommodate themselves to the affliction they were under. When God saith, you shall fast, it is time to say, we will fast. (3.) There must be a solemn assembly. The elders and the people, magistrates and subjects, must be gathered together; even all the inhabitants of the land, that God might be honoured by their public humili-

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liations, that they might thereby take the more shame to themselves, and that they might excite and stir up one another to the religious duties of the day: all had contributed to the national guilt, all shared in the national calamity, and therefore they must all join in the professions of repentance. (4.) They must come together in the temple, the house of the Lord your God, because that was the house of prayer, and there they might hope to meet with God, because it was the place which he had chosen to put his name there; there they might hope to speed, because it was a type of Christ and his mediation. Thus they interested themselves in Solomon's prayer for the acceptance of all the requests that should be put up in or towards this house; in which their present case was particularly mentioned, *1 Kings viii. 37.* If there be locust, if there be caterpillar. (5.) They must sanctify this fast, must observe it in a religious manner, with sincere devotion. What is a fast worth, if it be not sanctified? (6.) They must cry unto the Lord. To him they must make their complaint, and offer up their supplication to him. When we cry in our affliction, we must cry to the Lord; this is fasting to him, *Zech. vii. 5.*

2. Divers considerations suggested to induce them to proclaim this fast and to observe it strictly.

1. God was beginning a controversy with them. It was time to cry unto the Lord, for the day of the Lord is at hand, *ver. 15.* Either they mean the continuance and consequences of this present judgment which they now saw but breaking in upon them, or some greater judgments which this was but a preface to. However it be, this they are taught to make the matter of their lamentation, Alas, for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand. Therefore cry to God: For, (1.) The day of his judgment is very near, it is at hand; it will not slumber, and therefore you should not. It is time to fast and pray, for you have but a little time to turn you in. (2.) It will be very terrible, there is no escaping it, no resisting it, as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. See *Ihu. xiii. 6.* It is not a correction, but a destruction; and it comes from the hand not of a weak creature, but of the Almighty, and who knows (nay who doth not know) the power of his anger? Whither should we go with our cries but to him from whom the judgment we dread comes! There is no flying from him, but by flying to him; no escaping destruction from the Almighty, but by making our submission and supplication to the Almighty; this is taking hold on his strength, that we may make peace, *Isa. xxvii. 5.*

2. They saw themselves already under the tokens of his displeasure. It is time to fast and pray, for their distress was very great, *ver. 16.* (1.) Let them look into their own houses, and there was no plenty there as used to be. Those who kept a good table were now obliged to retrench; Is not the meat cut off before our eyes; we see it wherever we go. Note, Though it is common for the heart not to rue what the eye sees not, yet that heart is hard indeed which trembles not, and humbles not itself when God's judgments are before the eyes. If when God's hand is lifted up men will not see; when his hand is laid on, they shall see. Is not the meat many a time cut off before our eyes? Let us then labour for that spiritual meat which is not before our eyes, and which cannot be cut off. (2.) Let them look into God's house, and see the effects of the judgment there; joy and gladness were cut off from the house of God. Note, The house of our God is the proper place of joy and gladness; when David goes to the altar of God, it is to God my exceeding joy; but when joy and gladness is cut off from God's house, either by the corruption of holy things, or the persecution of holy persons; when serious godliness decays, and love waxes cold, then it is time to cry to the Lord, time to cry alas.

The prophet returns to describe the grievousness of the calamity in several particulars of it. Corn and cattle are husbandmen's staple commodities; now here he is deprived of both these. (1.) The caterpillars have devoured the corn, *ver. 17.* The garners, which they used to fill with corn, are laid desolate, and the barns broken down, because the corn is withered, and the owners think it not worth while to be at the charge of repairing them when they have nothing to put in them, nor likely to have any; for the seed is rotten under the clods, either through too much rain, or (which was the more common case in Canaan) for want of rain, or perhaps some insects under ground eat it up. When one crop fails, the husbandman hopes the next may make it up; but here they despair of that, the seedness being as bad as the harvest. (2.) The cattle perish too for want of grass, *ver. 18.* How do the beasts groan? This the prophet takes notice of, that the people might be affected with it, and lay to heart the judgment. The groans of the cattle should soften their hard and impenitent hearts. The herds of cattle, the large cattle, (black cattle we call them) they are perplexed, nay even the flocks of sheep, who will live upon a common, and take up with very short grass, yet even they are made desolate. See here the inferior creatures suffer for our transgression, and groan under the double burden of being serviceable to the sin of man, and subject to the curse of God for it; cursed is the ground for thy sake.

3. The prophet stirs them up to cry to God with the consideration of the examples given them for it.

(1.) His own example, *ver. 19.* O Lord to thee will I cry. He would not put them upon doing that which he would not resolve to do himself; nay, whether they would do it or no, he would. Note, If God ministers cannot prevail to affect others with the discoveries of divine wrath, yet they ought to be themselves affected with them; if they cannot bring others to cry to God, yet they must themselves be much in prayer. In time of trouble, we must not only pray but cry, must be fervent and importunate in prayer; and to God from whom both the destruction is, and the salvation must be, ought our cry to be always directed. That which engaged him to cry to God, was not so much any personal affliction, as the national calamity. The fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness; which seems to be meant of some parching scorching heat of the sun, which was as fire to the fruits of the earth, it consumed them all. Note, When God calls to contend by fire, it concerns those that have any interest in heaven to cry mightily to him for relief. See *Numb. xi. 2.* *Amos vii. 4.*

(2.) The example of the inferior creatures. The beasts of the field do not only groan, but they cry unto thee, *ver. 20.* They appeal to thy pity according to their capacity, and as if though they are not capable of a rational and revealed religion, yet they had something of dependance upon God by natural instinct. At least, when they groan by reason of their calamity, he is pleased to interpret it as if they cried to him, much more will he put a favourable construction upon the groanings of his own children, though sometimes so feeble that they cannot be uttered, *Rom. viii. 26.* The beasts are here said to cry unto God, as from him the lions seek their meat, *Psalm civ. 21.* and the young ravens, *Joh xxxviii. 41.* The complaints of the brute creatures here are for want of water. The rivers are dried up, through the excessive heat and for want of grass, for the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. And what better are they than beasts, that never cry to God but for corn and wine, and complain of nothing but the want of the delights of sense? Yet their crying to God in those cases shames the stupidity of those that cry not to God in any case.



## CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have, (1.) A further description of that terrible desolation which should be made in the land of Judah by the locusts and caterpillars, ver. 1—11. (2.) A serious call to the people, when they are under this fire judgment to return and repent, and to fast and pray, and seek unto God for mercy, with directions how to do this aright, ver. 12—17. (3.) A promise that upon their repentance God would remove the judgment, would repair the breaches made upon them by it, and restore unto them plenty of all good things, ver. 18—27. (4.) A prediction of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, by the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter days, ver. 28—32. Thus the beginning of this chapter is made terrible with the tokens of God's wrath, but the latter end of it made comfortable with the assurances of his favour, and it is in the way of repentance, that this blessed change is made; so that though it is only the last paragraph of the chapter that points directly at gospel times, yet the whole may be improved as a type and figure, representing the curses of the law invading men for their sins, and the comforts of the gospel flowing in to them upon their repentance.

1. **B**LOW ye the trumpet in Zion, and found an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; 2. A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong: there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. 3. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness: yea, and nothing shall escape them. 4. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. 5. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. 6. Before their face the people shall be much pained; all faces shall gather blackness. 7. They shall run like mighty men: they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: 8. Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. 9. They shall run to and fro in the city: they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses: they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. 10. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: 11. And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible, and who can abide it?

Here we have God contending with his own professing people for their sins, and executing upon them the judgment written in the law, Deut. xxviii. 42. *The fruit of thy land shall the locust consume*, which was one of those diseases of Egypt that God would bring upon them, ver. 60.

1. Here is the war proclaimed, ver. 1. *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion*; either to call the invading army together, and then the trumpet sounds a charge, or rather to give notice to Judah and Jerusalem of the approach of the judgment, that they might prepare to meet their God in the way of his judgments, and might endeavour by prayers and tears, the church's best artillery, to put by the stroke. It was the priest's business to sound the trumpet, Numb. x. 8. both as an appeal to God in the day of their distress, and a summons to the people to come together to seek his face. Note, It is the work of ministers to give warning from the word of God of the fatal consequences of sin, and to reveal his wrath from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And though it is not the privilege of Zion and Jerusalem to be exempted from the judgments of God, if they provoke him, yet it is their privilege to be warned of them that they may make their peace with him. Even in the holy mountain the alarm must be sounded, and then it sounds most dreadful, Amos iii. 2. *Now shall a trumpet be blown in the city, in the holy city, and the people not be afraid?* Surely they will; Amos iii. 6. *Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble*; they shall be made to tremble by the judgment itself; let them therefore tremble at the alarm of it.

2. Here is a general idea given of the day of battle, which cometh, which is nigh at hand, and there is no avoiding it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, in which he will both manifest and magnify himself. It is a day of darkness and gloominess, ver. 2. literally so, the swarms of locusts and caterpillars being so large and so thick as to darken the sky, Exod. x. 15. or rather figuratively; it will be a melancholy time, a time of grievous affliction. And it will come as the morning spread upon the mountains. The darkness of this day will come as suddenly as the morning light, as irresistibly will spread as far, and grow upon them as the morning light.

3. Here is the army drawn up in array; ver. 2. they are a great people and a strong. Any one that sees the vast numbers that there shall be of locusts and caterpillars, destroying the land, will say (as we are all apt to be most affected with what is present) surely, never was the like before, nor ever will be the like again. Note, Extraordinary judgments are rare things, and seldom happen, which is an instance of God's patience; when God had drowned the world once, he promised never to do it again. The army is here described to be, (1.) Very bold and daring: they are as horses, as war horses that rush into the battle and are not affrighted, Job xxxix. 2. and as horsemen carried on with martial fire and fury, so they shall run, ver. 4. Some of the ancients have observed, that the head of a locust is very like in shape to the head of a horse. (2.) Very loud and noisy; like the

noise of chariots, of many chariots, when driven furiously over rough ground, on the tops of the mountains, ver. 5. Hence is borrowed part of the description of the locusts which St. John saw rise out of the bottomless pit, Rev. ix. 7—9. *The shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared to the battle, and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses running to the battle.* Historians tell us that the noise made by swarms of locusts in those countries that use to be infested with them, hath sometimes been heard six miles off. The noise is likewise compared to that of a roaring fire; it is like the noise of a flame that devours the stubble; which noise is the more terrible, because that which it is the indication of, is devouring. Note, When God's judgments are abroad, they make a great noise; and it is necessary for the awakening of a secure and stupid world. (3.) They are very regular and keep ranks in their march; though numerous and greedy of spoil, yet they are as a strong people set in battle array, ver. 5. *They shall march every one on his way, straight forward, as if they had been trained up by the discipline of war to keep their post, and observe their right-hand man; They shall not break their ranks, nor one thrust another*, ver. 7, 8. Their number and swiftness shall breed no confusion. See how God can make creatures to act by rule, that have no reason to act by, when he designs to serve his own purposes by them. And see how necessary it is that those who are employed in any service for God, should observe order, and keep ranks, should diligently go on in their own works, and not stand in one another's way. (4.) They are very swift; they run like horsemen, ver. 4. *run like mighty men*, ver. 7. *they run to and fro in the city, and run upon the wall*, ver. 9. when God sends forth his command on earth, his word runs very swiftly, Psalm cxlvii. 15. Angels have wings, and so have locusts, when God makes use of them.

4. Here is the terrible execution done by this formidable army. (1.) In the country, ver. 3. View the army in the front, and you will see a fire devouring before them, they consume all as if they breathed fire; view it in the rear, and you will see those that come behind as furious as the foremost, behind them a flame burns. When they are gone, then it will appear what destruction they have made. Look upon the fields that they have not yet invaded, and they are as the garden of Eden, pleasant to the eye, and full of good fruits, they are the pride and glory of the country; but look upon the fields that they have eaten up, and they are as a desolate wilderness. One would not think that these had ever been like the former, and yet so they were perhaps but the day before, or that those should ever be made like these, and yet so they shall be perhaps by to-morrow night; yea, and nothing shall escape them that can possibly be made food for them. Let none be proud of the beauty of their grounds, any more than of their bodies, for God can soon change the face of both. (2.) In the city they shall climb the wall, ver. 7. they shall run upon the houses, and enter in at the windows like a thief, ver. 9. when Egypt was plagued with locusts, they filled Pharaoh's houses, and the houses of his servants, Exod. x. 5, 6. The locusts out of the bottomless pit, Satan's emissaries and missionaries of the man of sin, do as these locusts. God's judgments too, when they come with commission cannot be kept out with bars and bolts; they will find or force their way.

5. The impressions that should hereby be made upon the people. They shall find it to no purpose to make opposition, these enemies are invulnerable, and therefore irresistible, when they fall upon the sword they shall not be wounded, ver. 8. And those that cannot be hurt cannot be stopped: and therefore before their faces the people shall be much pained, ver. 6. as the merchants are in pain for their trading ships, when they hear they were just in the mouth of a squadron of the enemies. One was in pain for his field, another for his vineyard, and all faces gather blackness, which notes the utmost consternation imaginable. Men in fear look pale, but men in despair look black; the whiteness of a sudden fright, when it is settled, turns into blackness. What is the matter of our pride and pleasure, God can soon make the matter of our pain. The terror that the country should be in is described, ver. 10. by figurative expressions. *The earth shall quake, and the heavens tremble*, even the hearts that seemed undaunted, so firm that nothing would frighten them, as immovable as heaven or earth, yet shall be seized with astonishment. Or, when the inhabitants of the land are made to quake, it seems to them as if all about them trembled too. Through the prevalency of their fear, or for want of the supports of life they used to have, their eye shall wax dim, and their sight fail them, so that to them, the sun and moon shall seem to be dark, and the stars to withdraw their shining. Note, When God frowns upon men, the lights of heaven will be small joy to them. For man, by rebelling against his Creator, has forfeited the benefit of all the creatures. But though this here is to be understood figuratively, there is a day coming when it will be accomplished in the letter, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Particular judgments should awaken us to think of the general judgment.

6. We are here directed to look up to him who is the commander in chief of this formidable army, and that is God himself, ver. 11. It is his army, it is his camp, he raised it, he gives it commission; he utters his voice before it, as the general useth to give orders to his army what to do, and make a speech to animate the soldiers; it is the Lord that gives the word of command to all these animals, which they exactly observe. Some think with this cloud of locusts God sent terrible thunder, for that is called, *The voice of the Lord*, and was another of the plagues of Egypt, and this made the heavens and the earth tremble. It is the day of the Lord, as it was called, ver. 1. for in this war we are sure he carries the day; it must needs be his, for his camp is great and numerous, those whom he makes war upon, he can as here, overpower with numbers; and whoever he employs to execute his word, as the minister of his justice, is sure to be made strong and paragon; whom God gives commission to, he girds with strength for the executing of that commission. And this makes the great day of the Lord very terrible, to all those, who in that day are to be made the monuments of his justice; for who can abide it? None can escape the arrests of God's wrath, can make head against the force of it, or bear up under the weight of it, 1 Sam. vi. 20. Psalm lxxvi. 7.

12. ¶ Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. 13. And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. 14. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him: even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto the LORD your God? 15. ¶ Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast,



a fast, call a solemn assembly: 16. Gather the people; sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. 17. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

We have here an earnest exhortation to repentance, inferred from that desolating judgment described and threatened in the foregoing verses, *Therefore now turn ye to the Lord.* (1.) Thus you must answer the end and intention of the judgment; for it was sent for this end, to convince you of your sins, to humble you for them, to reduce you to your right minds, and to your allegiance. God brings us into straits, that he may bring us to repentance, and bring us to himself. (2.) Thus you may stay the progress of the judgment. Things are bad with you, but thus you may prevent their growing worse; nay, if you take this course, they will soon grow better.

Here is a gracious invitation,

1. To a *personal* repentance, exercised in the soul; *every family apart, and their wives apart*, Zech. xii. 12. When the judgments of God are abroad, each person is concerned to contribute his *quota* to the common supplications, having contributed to the common guilt. Every one must mend one, and mourn for one, and then we should all be mended, and all found among God's mourners.

Observe, 1. What we are here called to; which will teach us what it is to *repent*; for it is the same that the Lord our God still requires of us, we having all made work for repentance. (1.) We must be *truly humbled* for our sins, must be sorry we have by sin offended God, and ashamed we have by sin wronged ourselves, both wronged our judgments, and wronged our interests. There must be outward expressions of sorrow and shame, *fasting and weeping and mourning*; tears for the trouble must be turned into tears for the sin that procured it. But what will the outward expressions of sorrow avail, if the inward impressions be not agreeable, and not only accompany them, but be the root and spring of them, and give rise to them? And therefore it follows, *rend your heart, and not your garments*; not but that according to the custom of that age, it was proper for them to *rend their garments*, in token of great grief for their sins, and a holy indignation against themselves for their folly: but rest not in the doing of that, as if that were sufficient, but be more in care to accommodate your spirits, than to accommodate your dress to a day of fasting and humiliation; nay, *rend not your garments at all*, unless withal you *rend your hearts*, for the sign without the thing signified is but a jest and a mockery, and an affront to God. *Rending the heart*, is that which God looks for and requires, that is the *broken and contrite heart* which he will not despise, Psalm li. 17. When we are greatly grieved in heart for sin, so that it even cuts us to the heart to think how we have dishonoured God, and disparaged ourselves by it, when we conceive an aversion to sin, and earnestly desire and endeavour to get clear of the punishment of it, and never to return to the practice of it, then we *rend our hearts for it*; and then will God *rend the heavens*, and come down to us with mercy. (2.) We must be *thoroughly converted* to our God, and *come home* to him when we *fall out* with sin. *Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord*, ver. 12. and again, ver. 13. *Turn unto the Lord your God*. Our fasting and weeping is worth nothing, if we do not *with it* turn to God as our God. When we are fully convinced that it is our duty and interest to keep in with him, and are heartily sorry we have ever turned the back upon him, and thereupon by a firm and fixed resolution make his glory our end, his will our rule, and his favour our felicity, then we *return to the Lord our God*, and this we are all commanded and invited to do, and to do it quickly.

(2.) What arguments are here used to persuade this people thus to turn to the Lord, and to turn to him *with all their hearts*. When the heart is rent for sin, and rent from it, then it is prepared to turn *entirely* to God, and to be devoted entirely to him, and he will it all or none. Now to bring ourselves to this let us consider,

1. We are sure he is in the general a *good God*. Therefore we must *turn to the Lord our God*, not only because he has been just and righteous in punishing us for our sins, the fear of which should drive us to him, but because he is *gracious and merciful* in receiving us upon our repentance, the hope of which should draw us to him. He is *gracious and merciful*, delights not in the death of sinners but desires they may turn and live. *He is slow to anger* against those that offend him, but of *great kindness* towards those that desire to please him. These very expressions are used in God's proclamation of his name, when he caused his *goodness*, and with it all his glory to pass before Moses, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. *He repenteth him of the evil*, not that he changeth his mind, but when the sinner's mind is changed, God's way towards him is changed; the sentence is reversed, and the curse of the law is taken off. Note, That is genuine, ingenious, and evangelical repentance, which arises from a firm belief of the mercy of God which we have sinned against, and yet are not in despair. *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. The goodness of God, if it be rightly understood, instead of emboldening us to go on in sin, will be the most powerful inducement to repentance, Psalm cxxx. 4. The act of indemnity brings those to God, whom the act of attainder frightened from him.

2. We have reason to hope he will, upon our repentance give us that good which by sin we have forfeited and deprived ourselves of, ver. 14. That he will *return and repent*, that he will not proceed against us, as he has done, but will act in favour of us. Therefore let us *repent* of our sin against him, and return to him in a way of duty, because then we may hope he will repent of his judgments against us, and return to us in a way of mercy. Now observe, (1.) The manner of the expectation is very humble and modest; *who knows if he will?* Some think it is expressed thus doubtfully to check the presumption and security of the people, and to quicken them to a holy carefulness and liveliness in their repentance, as Josh. xxiv. 19. Or rather it is expressed doubtfully, because it is the removal of a temporal judgment that they here promise themselves, which we cannot be so confident of, as we may that in the general God is *gracious and merciful*. There is no question at all to be made, but that if we truly repent of our sins, God will forgive them and be reconciled to us, but whether he will remove this or the other affliction we are under, may well be questioned, and yet the probability of it should encourage us to repent. Promises of temporal good things are often made with a peradventure; *it may be you shall be his*, Zeph. ii. 3. David's sin is pardoned, and yet the child shall die; and when David prayed for its life he said, as here, *who can tell whether God will be gracious to me* in this matter likewise? 2 Sam. xii. 22.

The Ninevites repented and reformed upon such a consideration as this, *Jonah* iii. 9. (2.) The matter of the expectation is very pious; they hope God will return and repent, and *leave a blessing behind him*, not as if he were about to go from them, and they could be content with any blessing in lieu of his presence, but *behind him*, i. e. after he hath ceased his controversy with us, he will bestow a blessing upon us; and what is it? It is a *meat-offering and a drink-offering to the Lord our God*. The fruits of the earth are called a *blessing*, Isa. lxxv. 8. because they depend upon God's blessing, and are necessary blessings to us. They had been deprived of these, and that which grieved them most while they were so, was, that God's altar wanted its offerings and God's priests their maintenance; that therefore which they comfort themselves with the prospect of in their return of plenty, is, that then there should be *meat-offerings and drink-offerings* in abundance brought to God's altar, which they more desired than to see the wonted abundance of *meat and drink* brought to their own tables. Thus when Hezekiah was in hopes he should recover of his sickness, he asked, *what is the sign that I shall go up, not to the thrones of judgment, or to the council-board, but to the house of the Lord?* Isa. xxxviii. 22. Note, The plentiful enjoyment of God's ordinances in their power and purity, is the most valuable instance of a nation's prosperity, and the greatest blessing that can be desired. If God give the blessing of the meat-offering and the drink-offering, that will bring along with it other blessings, will sanctify them, sweeten them, and secure them.

2. They are here called to a *public, national* repentance, to be exercised in the solemn assembly as a national act; for the glory of God, and the excitement of one another; and that the neighbour nations might know and observe what it was that qualified them for God's gracious returns in mercy to them, which they would be the admiring witnesses of. Let us see here,

1. How the congregation must be called together, ver. 15, 16. The trumpet was blown, ver. 1. to sound an *alarm of war*, but now it must be blown in order to a treaty of peace; God is willing to show mercy to his people, if he do but find them in a frame fit for it; and therefore call them together *sanctify a fast*. By the law many annual feasts were appointed, but only one day in the year was to be observed as a fast, the *day of atonement*; a day to afflict the soul, and if they had kept close to God and their duty, there would have been no occasion to observe any more; but now they had by sin brought the judgments of God upon them, they are often called to *fasting*. What was said, chap. i. 14. is here repeated, *call a solemn assembly, gather the people, priests then to come together upon this errand, sanctify the congregation*, appoint a time for solemn preparation before hand, and put them in mind to prepare themselves: let not the greatest be excused, but *assemble the elders*, the judges and magistrates; let not the meanest be passed by, but *gather the children and those that suck the breasts*: It is good to bring little children as soon as they are capable of understanding any thing, to religious assemblies, that they may be trained up betimes in the way wherein they should go; but these were brought even when they were at the breast, and were kept fasting, that by their cries for the breast, the hearts of the parents might be moved to repent of sin which God might justly visit upon their children, so as that the *tongue of the sucking child might cleave to the roof of his mouth*, Lam. iv. 4.

4. And that on them God might have compassion, as he had on the infants of Nineveh, *Jonah* iv. 11. New-married people must not be exempted: *let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet*; let not them take state upon them, as usual, not put on their ornaments or indulge themselves in mirth, but apply themselves to the duties of the public fast, with as much gravity and sadness as any of their neighbours. Note, Private joys must always give way to public sorrows, both those for affliction, and those for sin.

2. How the work of the day must be carried on, ver. 17. (1.) The priests, the Lord's ministers, must preside in the congregation, and be God's mouth to the people, and theirs to God; who but they should stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God whose business it was to make intercession upon ordinary occasion? (2.) They must officiate *between the porch and the altar*; there they used to attend about the sacrifices, and therefore now they have no sacrifices to offer, or next to none, there they must offer up spiritual sacrifices. There the people must see them *weeping and wrestling*, like their father Jacob, and be helped into the same devout frame. Ministers must themselves be affected with those things wherewith they desire to affect others. It was *between the porch and the altars*, that Zechariah the son of Jehoiadah was put to death for his faithfulness, that precious blood God would require at their hands, and therefore to turn away the judgment threatened for it there, they must *weep*. (3.) They must pray; words are here put into their mouths, which they might in their prayers enlarge upon. Their petition must be, *Spare thy people, O Lord*. God's people, when they are in distress, can expect no relief against God's justice, but what comes from his mercy. They cannot say, *Lord, right us*, but, *Lord, spare us*. We deserve the correction, we need it, but, *Lord, mitigate it*. The sinner's supplication is, *spare us, good Lord*. Their plea must be taken from the relation wherein they stand to God; they are *thy people*, and *thine heritage*, therefore have compassion on them; but especially from the concern of God's glory in their trouble. *Lord, give not thine heritage to reproach*, to the reproach of famine; let not the land of Canaan, that hath so long been celebrated for the glory of all lands, now be made the scorn of all lands; let not the heathen rule over them, as they will easily do when thine heritage is thus impoverished and disabled to subsist. Let not the heathen make them a *proverb*, or a *by word*, so some read it; let it never be said, as poor and beggarly as an Israelite. Note, The maintaining of the credit of the nation among its neighbours is a blessing to be desired and prayed for by all that wish well to it. But that reproach of the church is especially to be dreaded and deprecated, which reflects upon God; let them not *say among the people, where is their God?* That God who has promised to help them, whom they have boasted so much of, and put such a confidence in. If God's heritage be destroyed, the neighbours will say, that God was either weak and could not relieve them; or unkind and would not. God thus triumphs over the pretended deities, *Deut. xxxii. 37. Where are now their gods in whom they trusted?* And Sennacherib thus triumphs over them, *Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?* But it must by no means be suffered, that any should say of Israel, *Where is their God?* for we are sure our God is in the heavens, Psalm cxv. 2, 3. is in his temple, Psalm xi. 4.

18. Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. 19. Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: 20. But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive them into a land barren and



and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. 21. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the LORD will do great things. 22. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. 23. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. 24. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you. 26. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wonderfully with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. 27. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

See how ready God is to succour and relieve his people, how he waits to be gracious; as soon as ever they humble themselves under his hand, and pray, and seek his face, he presently meets them with his favours; they prayed that God would spare them, and see here with what good words and comfortable words he answered them; for God's promises are real answers to the prayers of faith, because with him saying and doing are not two things. Now observe,

1. Whence this mercy promise shall take rise, ver. 18. God will be jealous for his land, and pity his people. He will have an eye, (1.) To his own honour and the reputation of his covenant with Israel, by which he had conveyed to them that good land, and had given in the value of it very high; now he will not suffer it to be despised or disparaged, but will be jealous for the credit of his land and the inhabitants of it, who had been praised as a happy people, and therefore must not lie open to reproach as a miserable people. (2.) To their distress; He will pity his people, and in pity to them he will restore them their forfeited comforts. God's compassion is a great encouragement to those that come humbly to him as penitents and as petitioners.

2. What his mercy shall be; in several instances,

(1.) The destroying army shall be dispersed and defeated, ver. 20. I will remove far off from you the northern army, that army of locusts and caterpillars that invaded you from the north; brought in upon the wings of a north wind, an army which you could put no stop to the progress of: but when you have made your peace with God, he will ease you of these soldiers that are quartered upon you, and will drive them into a land barren and desolate, into that vast howling wilderness that Israel wandered in, where after having surfeited upon the plenty of Canaan, they shall perish for want of sustenance; those that have their face to the east-sea, the dead sea, which lay east of Judea, shall perish in that, and the rear of the army shall be lost in the great sea, called here the utmost sea. They had made the land barren and desolate, and now God will cast them into a land barren and desolate. Thus those whom God employs for the correction of his people come afterwards to be themselves reckoned with; and the rod thrown into the fire. Nothing shall remain of these swarms of insects but the ill favour of them. When Egypt was eased of the plague of locusts, they were carried away to the Red-sea, Exod. x. 9. Note, When an affliction has done its work, it shall be removed in mercy, as the locusts of Canaan were from a penitent people, not as the locusts of Egypt were removed in wrath from an impenitent prince, only to make room for another plague. Many interpreters by this northern army, understand that of Sennacherib, which was dispersed, when God by it had accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, and upon Jerusalem, Isa. x. 12. This enemy shall be driven away, because he has done great things, has done a great deal of mischief; and has magnified to do it, has done it in the pride of his heart; therefore it follows, ver. 21. The Lord will do great things, for his people as the enemy has done great things against them; to convince them that wherein they deal proudly, he is and will be above them; that what great things soever they did, they did no more than God commissioned them to do; and as when he said to them go, they went, so when he said to them, come, they came, to shew that they were soldiers under him.

(2.) The destroyed land shall be watered and made fruitful. When the army is scattered, yet what shall we do if the desolation they have made continue? It is therefore promised, ver. 22. that the pastures of the wilderness, the pastures which the locust had left as bare as the wilderness, shall again spring, and the trees shall again bear their fruit, particularly the fig-tree, and the vine. But when we see how the country is wasted, we are tempted to say, can these dry bones live? If the Lord should make windows in heaven, it cannot be; but it shall be, for, ver. 23. the Lord has given; and will give you the former rain, and the latter rain, and if he give them in mercy, he will give them moderately, so that the rain shall not turn into a judgment, and he will give them in due season; the latter rain in the first month, when it was wanted and expected. It would make it comfortable to them, to see it coming from the hand of God, and ordered by his wisdom, for then we are sure it is well ordered. He hath given you a teacher of righteousness, so the margin reads it, for the same word that signifies the rain, signifies a teacher, and that which we translate moderately, is according to righteousness; and this teacher of righteousness, saith one of the rabbins, is the king Messiah; and of him many others understand this; for he is a teacher come from God, and he shews us the way of righteousness; but others understand it of any prophet that instructs unto righteousness; and some of Ezekiah particularly, others of Isaiah. Note, It is a good sign God has mercy in store for a people, when he sends them teachers of righteousness, pastors after his own heart.

(3.) All their losses shall be repaired, ver. 25. I will restore to you the ears that the locust hath eaten; you shall be comforted according to the time that you have been afflicted, and shall have years of plenty to balance the years of famine. Thus doth it repent the Lord concerning his servants, when they repent, and to shew how perfectly he is reconciled to them, he makes good the damage they have sustained by his judgments, and like the jailer, washeth their stripes. Though in justice he distained upon them, and did them no wrong; yet in compassion he makes restitution; as the father of the prodigal upon his return made up all he had lost by his sin and folly, and

took him into his family, as in his former estate. The locusts and caterpillars are here called God's great army which he sent among them, and he will therefore repair what they had devoured, because they were his army.

(2.) They shall have great abundance of all good things. The earth shall yield her increase, and they shall enjoy it. Look into the stores where they lay up, and you shall find the floors full of wheat, and the fats overflowing with wine and oil, ver. 24. Whereas in the day of their distress, the wine and oil languished, and the barns were broken down, chap. i. 10—17. Look upon their tables where they lay out what they have laid up, and you shall find that they eat in plenty and are satisfied, ver. 26. They do not eat to excess, nor are surfeited, we hope the drunkards are cured by the late affliction of their inordinate love of wine and strong drink, for though they were brought in howling for the scarcity, chap. i. 5. they are not brought in again here singing for the plenty of it; but now all shall have enough and shall know when they have enough, for God will make their food nourishing, and give to them to be content with it.

These are the mercies promised, and in these God doth great things, ver. 21. He deals wonderfully with his people, ver. 26. Herein he glorifies his power, and shews that he can relieve his people, though their distress be never so great, and glorifies his goodness that he will do it upon their repentance, though their provocations were never so great. Note, When God deals graciously with poor sinners that return to him, it must be acknowledged that he deals wonderfully, and doth great things. Some expositors understand these promises figuratively, as pointing at the gospel grace, and having their accomplishment in the abundant comforts that are treasured up for believers in the covenant of grace, and the satisfaction of soul they have therein. When God sends us his promises to be the matter of our comfort, his graces to be the grounds of it, and his Spirit to be the author of it, we may well own that he hath sent us according to his promise here, ver. 19. corn, and wine and oil, or that which is unspeakably better, and we have reason to be satisfied therewith.

3. What use shall be made of these returns of God's mercy to them, and the good account they shall turn to

1. God shall have the glory of it; for they shall rejoice in the Lord their God, ver. 23. and what is the matter of their rejoicing, shall be the matter of their thanksgiving, they shall praise the name of the Lord their God, ver. 26. and not praise their idols, not call their corn and wine the rewards that their lovers had given them. Note, Then the plenty of our creature comforts is a mercy indeed to us, when by them our hearts are enlarged in love and thankfulness to God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, though we serve him but poorly. When God restores to us plenty after we have known scarcity, as it is doubly pleasant to us, so it should make us the more thankful to God. When Israel comes out of a wilderness into a Canaan, and there eats and is full, surely he will then bless the Lord with a very sensible pleasure, for that good land which he has given him, Deut. viii. 10.

2. They shall have the credit and comfort, and spiritual benefit of it. When God gives them plenty again, and gives them to be satisfied with it.

(1.) Their reputation shall be retrieved; they and their God shall be no more reflected upon as unfaithful to one another, when they are returned to him in a way of duty, and he to them in a way of mercy, ver. 19. I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen, that triumphed in your calamities and insulted over you; and ver. 26. and again, ver. 27. My people shall never be ashamed, as they have been, of their good land which they used to boast of, but shall again, and ever, have the same occasion to boast of it. Note, It redounds much to the honour of God, when he doth that which saves the honour of his people; and those that are his people indeed, though they may be for a time, they shall not be always a reproach among the heathen; if we be rightly ashamed of our sin against God, we shall never be ashamed of our glorying in God. (2.) Their joys shall be revived, ver. 23. Be glad and rejoice, O land, and all the inhabitants of it, Times of plenty used to be times of joy, yet the favour of God puts gladness into the heart; more than they have whose corn and wine and oil increaseth. But especially be glad then ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, ver. 23. They mourned in Zion, ver. 15. and therefore there in a particular manner they shall rejoice: for those that sow in penitential tears, shall certainly reap in thankful joys: the children of Zion who led the rest in fasting, must lead the rest in rejoicing. But observe, they shall rejoice in the Lord their God; not so much in the good things themselves that are given them, as in the good hand that gives them, and in the return of his favour to them, as theirs in covenant, which these good things are the tokens and pledges of; the joy of harvest and the joy of a feast, must both terminate in God, whose love we should taste in all the gifts of his bounty, that we may make him our chief joy, as he is our chief good, and the fountain of all good to us. (3.) Their faith in God shall be confirmed and increased. When temporal mercies are made by the grace of God to be of spiritual advantage to us, and plenty for the body is so far from being an enemy (as with many it proves) that it becomes a friend to the prosperity of the soul, then they are mercies indeed to us. This is promised here, ver. 27. Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, the holy one in the midst of thee, (Hos. xi. 9.) and that I am the Lord your God and none else. As it proves that the Lord is God, and there is none other, because he wounds, and he heals, he forms light and darkness, he doth good and evil, Isa. xlv. 7. Deut. xxxii. 39. So it proves him to be the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, and a father to them; that as a father he both corrects them when they offend, and comforts them when they repent. It was the burden of the threatenings in Ezekiel's prophecy, such and such evils I will bring upon you, and ye shall know that I am the Lord: and the same is here made the crown of the promises; you shall eat and be satisfied, and rejoice, and thus ye shall know that I am the Lord. Note, We should labour to grow in our acquaintance with God by all providences, both merciful and afflictive. When God gives to his people plenty, and peace and joy upon their return to him, he thereby gives them to understand, that he is pleased with their repentance, that he has pardoned their sins, and that he is theirs as much as ever; that they are taken into the same covenant with him, for he is the Lord their God, and into the same communion, for he is in the midst of them; nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for, and as the sun in the centre of the worlds, is in the midst of them, as to diffuse his benign influences to all the parts of his land.

3. Even the inferior creatures shall share in it, and be made easy by it. Fear not, O land, ver. 21. Be not afraid ye beasts of the field, ver. 22. They had suffered for the sin of man, and for God's quarrel with him, and now they shall fare the better for man's repentance, and God's reconciliation to him. Nay, the beasts were said to cry unto God, chap. i. 20. and now that cry is answered, and they are bid not to be afraid, for they shall have plenty of all that which their nature craves. God in sparing Nineveh had an eye to the cattle, Jonah iv. 10. for the cattle had fasted, chap. iii. 8. This may lead us to think of the restitution of all things, when the creature that is now made subject to vanity, and groans under it, shall be brought, though not into the glorious joy, yet into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 21.



28. ¶ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; 29. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

The promises of corn and wine and oil, in the foregoing verses, would be very acceptable to a wasted country, but here we are taught, that we must not rest in those things; God has reserved some better things for us, and these verses have reference to those better things; both the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory, and the happiness of true believers in both. We are here told,

1. How the kingdom of grace shall be introduced by a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, ver. 28, 29. We are not to seek for the meaning of this promise nor in doubt what it refers to, and wherein it had its accomplishment, for the apostle Peter has given us an infallible explication and application of it, assuring us that when the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, at the day of Pentecost, *Acts ii. 1, &c.* that that was the very thing which was spoken of here by the prophet Joel, ver. 16, 17. That was the gift of the Spirit, which according to this prediction was to come, and we are not to look for any other, no more than for another accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. Now, (1.) The blessing itself here promised is the pouring out of the Spirit of God, his gifts, graces, and comforts, which the blessed Spirit is the author of. We often read in the Old Testament of the Spirit of the Lord coming by drops, as it were, upon the judges and prophets whom God raised up for extraordinary services, but now the Spirit shall be poured out plentifully in a full stream; as was promised with an eye to gospel-times, *Isa. xlv. 3. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.* (2.) The time fixed for this is afterwards, after the fulfilling of the foregoing promises, this shall be fulfilled. St. Peter expounds this of the last days, the days of the Messiah, by whom the world was to have its last revelation of the divine will and grace in the last days of the Jewish church, a little before its dissolution. (3.) The extent of this blessing in respect of the persons on whom it shall be bestowed; the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, i. e. not as hitherto upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles also; for in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, *Rom. x. 11, 12.* Hitherto divine revelation was confined to the seed of Abraham, none but those of the land of Israel had the Spirit of prophecy, but in the last days all flesh shall see the glory of God, *Isa. xl. 5.* and shall come to worship before him, *Isa. lvi. 23.* The Jews understand it of all flesh in the land of Israel, and Peter himself did not fully understand it as speaking of the Gentiles, till he saw it accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his friends, who were Gentiles, *Acts x. 44, 45.* which was but a continuation of that same gift which was bestowed on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, i. e. upon all those whose hearts are made hearts of flesh, soft and tender, and so prepared to receive the impressions and influences of the Holy Ghost. Upon all flesh, i. e. upon some of all sorts of men; the gifts of the Spirit shall not be so sparing, or so much confined as they have been, but shall be more general and diffusive of themselves. (1.) The Spirit shall be poured out upon some of each sex, not your sons only; but your daughters shall prophesy; we read of four sisters in one family that were prophetesses, *Acts xxi. 9.* Not the parents only, but the children shall be filled with the Spirit; which intimates the continuance of this gift for some ages successively in the church. (2.) Upon some of each age; your old men that are past their vigour, and whose spirits begin to decay, your young men that have yet but little acquaintance with and experience of divine things, yet they shall dream dreams, and see visions, i. e. God will reveal himself by dreams and visions both to young and old. (3.) Upon those of the meanest rank and condition; even upon the servants and the handmaids; the Jewish doctors say, that prophecy doth not reside on any, but such as are wise, valiant, and rich, not upon the soul of a poor man, or a man in sorrow; but in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, *Gal. iii. 28.* There were many that were called being servants, *1 Cor. vii. 21.* but that was no obstruction to their receiving the Holy Ghost. (4.) The effect of this blessing, they shall prophesy; they shall receive new discoveries of divine things, and that not for their own use only, but for the benefit of the church. They shall interpret scripture, and speak of things secret, distant, and future, which by the utmost sagacities of reason, and their natural powers, they could not have any insight into or foresight of. By these extraordinary gifts the Christian church was first founded and set up, and the Scriptures written, and ministry settled, by which, with the ordinary operations and influences of the Spirit, it was to be afterwards maintained and kept up.

2. How the kingdom of glory shall be introduced by the universal change of nature, ver. 30, 31. The pouring out of the Spirit will be very comfortable to the righteous; but let the unrighteous hear this and tremble. There is a great and terrible day of the Lord coming, which shall be ushered in with wonders in heaven and earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood. This is to have its full accomplishment (as the learned Dr. Pocock thinks) in the day of judgment at the end of time, before which these signs will be performed in the letter of them, yet so as that it was accomplished in part in the death of Christ, which is called the judgment of this world, when the earth quaked and the sun was darkened; and a great and terrible day it was; and more fully in the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a type and figure of the general judgment, and before which there were many amazing prodigies, besides the convulsions of states and kingdoms prophesied of under the figurative expressions of turning the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the wars and rumours of wars, and distress of nations which our Saviour spoke of as the beginning of these sorrows, *Matt. xxiv. 6, 7.* But before the last judgment there will be wonders indeed in heaven and earth, the dissolution of both without a metaphor. The judgments of God upon a sinful world, and the frequent destruction of wicked kingdoms by fire and sword, are prefaces to and prefiges of the judgment of the world at the last day. Those on whom the Spirit is poured out, shall foresee and foretell that great and terrible day of the Lord, and expound the wonders in heaven and earth, that go before it; for as to his first coming, so to his second did and do all the prophets bear witness, *Rev. x. 7.*

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3. The safety and happiness of all true believers both in the first and second coming of Jesus Christ, ver. 32. This speaks of particular persons, for to them the New Testament has more respect, and less to kingdoms and nations than the Old.

Now observe here,

1. That there is a salvation wrought out; though the day of the Lord will be great and terrible, yet in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance from the terror of it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, who knows how to separate between the precious and the vile, in the everlasting gospel, which went from Zion, in the church of the first-born, typified by mount Zion, and which is the Jerusalem that is from above, there is deliverance; a way of escaping the wrath to come is found out and laid open. Christ is himself not only the Saviour but the salvation; he is so to the ends of the earth. This deliverance laid up for us in the covenant of grace is in performance of the promises made to the fathers, there shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said. See *Luke i. 72.* Note, This is ground of comfort and hope to sinners, that whatever danger there is in their case, there is also deliverance, deliverance for them if it be not their own fault. And if we would share in this deliverance, we must apply ourselves to the gospel Zion, to God's Jerusalem.

2. That there is a remnant that are interested in this salvation, and for whom the deliverance is wrought. It is in that remnant, i. e. among them that the deliverance is; or in them, i. e. in their souls and spirits, there are the earnest and evidences of it; Christ in you the hope of glory. They are called a remnant, because they are but a few in comparison with the multitudes that are left to perish; a little remnant, but a chosen one, a remnant according to the election of grace. And here we are told who they are that shall be delivered in the great day. (1.) Those that sincerely call upon God. Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, whether Jew or Gentile, (for the apostle expounds it so, *Rom. x. 13.* where he lays this down as the great rule of the gospel by which we must all be judged) shall be delivered. This calling on God supposeth knowledge of him, faith in him, desire towards him, dependance on him, and as an evidence of the sincerity of all this, a conscientious obedience to him; for without that, crying Lord, Lord, will not stand us in any stead. Note, It is the praying remnant that shall be the saved remnant. And it will aggravate the ruin of those who perish, that they might have been saved on such easy terms. (2.) Those that are effectually called to God. The deliverance is sure to the remnant whom the Lord shall call; not only with the common call of the gospel, with which many are called that are not chosen; but with a special call into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, whom the Lord predestinates or prepares, so the Chaldee. St. Peter borrows this phrase, *Acts ii. 39.* Note, Those only shall be delivered in the great day that are now effectually called from sin to God, itself to Christ, from things below to things above.

### CHAP. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had a gracious promise of deliverance in mount Zion and Jerusalem; now this whole chapter is a comment upon that promise, shewing what that deliverance shall be, how it shall be wrought by the destruction of the church's enemies, and how it shall be perfected in the everlasting rest and joy of the church. This was in part accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from the attempt that Sennacherib made upon it in Hezekiah's time, and afterwards in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, and other deliverances wrought for the Jewish church betwixt that and Christ's coming. But it has a further reference to the great redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, and the destruction of our spiritual enemies, and all their agents, and will have its full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day. Here is a prediction, (1.) Of God's reckoning with the enemies of his people for all the injuries and indignities that they had done them, and returning them upon their own head, ver. 1—8. (2.) Of God's judging all nations when the measure of their iniquity is full, and appearing publicly to the everlasting confusion of all impenitent sinners, and the everlasting comfort of all his faithful servants, ver. 9—17. (3.) Of the provision God has made for the refreshment of his people, for their safety and purity, when their enemies shall be made desolate, ver. 18—21. These promises were not of private interpretation only, but were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of this scripture might have hope.

1. FOR, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah, and Jerusalem. 2. I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. 3. And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink. 4. Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompense? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head; 5. Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things: 6. The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. 7. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head: 8. And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it.

We have often heard of the year of the redeemed, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion; now here we have a description of the transactions of that year, and a prophecy of what shall be done when it comes, whenever it comes, for it comes often, and at the end of time it will come once for all.

1. It shall be the year of the redeemed, for God will bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 1. Though the bondage of God's people may



and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill favour shall come up, because he hath done great things. 21. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the LORD will do great things. 22. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. 23. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. 24. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you. 26. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wonderfully with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. 27. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

See how ready God is to succour and relieve his people, how he waits to be gracious; as soon as ever they humble themselves under his hand, and pray, and seek his face, he presently meets them with his favours; they prayed that God would spare them, and see here with what good words and comfortable words he answered them; for God's promises are real answers to the prayers of faith, because with him saying and doing are not two things. Now observe,

1. Whence this mercy promise shall take rise, ver. 18. God will be jealous for his land, and pity his people. He will have an eye, (1.) To his own honour and the reputation of his covenant with Israel, by which he had conveyed to them that good land, and had given in the value of it very high; now he will not suffer it to be despised or disparaged, but will be jealous for the credit of his land and the inhabitants of it, who had been praised as a happy people, and therefore must not lie open to reproach as a miserable people. (2.) To their distress; he will pity his people, and in pity to them he will restore them their forfeited comforts. God's compassion is a great encouragement to those that come humbly to him as penitents and as petitioners.

2. What his mercy shall be; in several instances,

(1.) The destroying army shall be dispersed and defeated, ver. 20. I will remove far off from you the northern army, that army of locusts and caterpillars that invaded you from the north; brought in upon the wings of a north wind, an army which you could put no stop to the progress of: but when you have made your peace with God, he will ease you of these soldiers that are quartered upon you, and will drive them into a land barren and desolate, into that vast howling wilderness that Israel wandered in, where after having surfeited upon the plenty of Canaan, they shall perish for want of sustenance; those that have their face to the east-sea, the dead sea, which lay east of Judea, shall perish in that, and the rear of the army shall be lost in the great sea, called here the utmost sea. They had made the land barren and desolate, and now God will cast them into a land barren and desolate. Thus those whom God employs for the correction of his people come afterwards to be themselves reckoned with; and the rod thrown into the fire. Nothing shall remain of these swarms of insects but the ill favour of them. When Egypt was eased of the plague of locusts, they were carried away to the Red-sea, Exod. x. 9. Note, When an affliction has done its work, it shall be removed in mercy, as the locusts of Canaan were from a penitent people, not as the locusts of Egypt were removed in wrath from an impenitent prince, only to make room for another plague. Many interpreters by this northern army, understand that of Sennacherib, which was dispersed, when God by it had accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, and upon Jerusalem, Isa. x. 12. This enemy shall be driven away, because he has done great things, has done a great deal of mischief; and has magnified to do it, has done it in the pride of his heart; therefore it follows, ver. 21. The Lord will do great things, for his people as the enemy has done great things against them; to convince them that wherein they dealt proudly, he is and will be above them; that what great things soever they did, they did no more than God commissioned them to do; and as when he said to them go, they went, so when he said to them, come, they came, to shew that they were soldiers under him.

(2.) The destroyed land shall be watered and made fruitful. When the army is scattered, yet what shall we do if the desolation they have made continue? It is therefore promised, ver. 22. that the pastures of the wilderness, the pastures which the locust had left as bare as the wilderness, shall again spring, and the trees shall again bear their fruit, particularly the fig-tree, and the vine. But when we see how the country is wasted, we are tempted to say, can these dry bones live? If the Lord should make windows in heaven, it cannot be; but it shall be, for, ver. 23. the Lord has given; and will give you the former rain, and the latter rain, and if he give them in mercy, he will give them moderately, so that the rain shall not turn into a judgment, and he will give them in due season; the latter rain in the first month, when it was wanted and expected. It would make it comfortable to them, to see it coming from the hand of God, and ordered by his wisdom, for then we are sure it is well ordered. He hath given you a teacher of righteousness, so the margin reads it, for the same word that signifies the rain, signifies a teacher, and that which we translate moderately, is according to righteousness; and this teacher of righteousness, saith one of the rabbins, is the king Messiah; and of him many others understand this; for he is a teacher come from God, and he shews us the way of righteousness; but others understand it of any prophet that instructs unto righteousness; and some of Hezekiah particularly, others of Isaiah. Note, It is a good sign God has mercy in store for a people, when he sends them teachers of righteousness, pastors after his own heart.

(3.) All their losses shall be repaired, ver. 25. I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten; you shall be comforted according to the time that you have been afflicted, and shall have years of plenty, to balance the years of famine. Thus doth it report the Lord concerning his servants, when they repent, and to shew how perfectly he is reconciled to them, he makes good the damage they have sustained by his judgments, and like the father, will restore their stripes. Though in justice he disclaimed upon them, and did them no wrong; yet in compassion he makes restitution; as the father of the prodigal upon his return made up all he had lost by his sin and folly, and

took him into his family, as in his former estate. The locusts and caterpillars are here called God's great army which he sent among them, and he will therefore repair what they had devoured, because they were his army.

(2.) They shall have great abundance of all good things. The earth shall yield her increase, and they shall enjoy it. Look into the stores where they lay up, and you shall find the floors full of wheat, and the fats overflowing with wine and oil, ver. 21. Whereas in the day of their distress, the wine and oil languished, and the barns were broken down, chap. i. 10—17. Look upon their tables where they lay out what they have laid up, and you shall find that they eat in plenty and are satisfied, ver. 26. They do not eat to excess, nor are surfeited, we hope the drunkards are cured by the late affliction of their inordinate love of wine and strong drink, for though they were brought in howling for the scarcity, chap. i. 5. they are not brought in again here singing for the plenty of it; but now all shall have enough and shall know when they have enough, for God will make their food nourishing, and give to them to be content with it.

These are the mercies promised, and in these God doth great things, ver. 21. He deals wonderfully with his people, ver. 26. Herein he glorifies his power, and shews that he can relieve his people, though their distress be never so great, and glorifies his goodness that he will do it upon their repentance, though their provocations were never so great. Note, When God deals graciously with poor sinners that return to him, it must be acknowledged that he deals wonderfully, and doth great things. Some expositors understand these promises figuratively, as pointing at the gospel grace, and having their accomplishment in the abundant comforts that are treasured up for believers in the covenant of grace, and the satisfaction of soul they have therein. When God sends us his promises to be the matter of our comfort, his graces to be the grounds of it, and his Spirit to be the author of it, we may well own that he hath sent us according to his promise here, ver. 19. corn, and wine and oil, or that which is unpeakably better, and we have reason to be satisfied therewith.

3. What use shall be made of these returns of God's mercy to them, and the good account they shall turn to:

1. God shall have the glory of it; for they shall rejoice in the Lord their God, ver. 23; and what is the matter of their rejoicing, shall be the matter of their thanksgiving, they shall praise the name of the Lord their God, ver. 26. and not praise their idols, not call their corn and wine the rewards that their lovers had given them. Note, Then the plenty of our creature-comforts is a mercy indeed to us, when by them our hearts are enlarged in love and thankfulness to God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, though we serve him but poorly. When God restores to us plenty after we have known scarcity, as it is doubly pleasant to us, so it should make us the more thankful to God. When Israel comes out of a wilderness into a Canaan, and there eats and is full, surely he will then bless the Lord with a very sensible pleasure, for that good land which he has given him, Deut. viii. 10.

2. They shall have the credit and comfort, and spiritual benefit of it. When God gives them plenty again, and gives them to be satisfied with it. (1.) Their reputation shall be retrieved; they and their God shall be no more reflected upon as unfaithful to one another, when they are returned to him in a way of duty, and he to them in a way of mercy, ver. 19. I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen, that triumphed in your calamities and insulted over you; and ver. 26. and again, ver. 27. My people shall never be ashamed, as they have been, of their good land which they used to boast of, but shall again, and ever, have the same occasion to boast of it. Note, It redounds much to the honour of God; when he doth that which saves the honour of his people; and those that are his people indeed, though they may be for a time, they shall not be always a reproach among the heathen; if we be rightly ashamed of our sin against God, we shall never be ashamed of our glorying in God. (2.) Their joys shall be revived, ver. 23. Be glad and rejoice, O land, and all the inhabitants of it. Times of plenty used to be times of joy, yet the favour of God puts gladness into the heart; more than they have whole corn and wine and oil increase. But especially be glad then ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, ver. 23. They mourned in Zion, ver. 15. and therefore there in a particular manner they shall rejoice: for those that sow in penitential tears, shall certainly reap in thankful joys: the children of Zion who led the rest in fasting, must lead the rest in rejoicing. But observe, they shall rejoice in the Lord their God; not so much in the good things themselves that are given them, as in the good hand that gives them, and in the return of his favour to them, as theirs in covenant, which these good things are the tokens and pledges of; the joy of harvest and the joy of a feast, must both terminate in God, whose love we should taste in all the gifts of his bounty, that we may make him our chief joy, as he is our chief good, and the fountain of all good to us. (3.) Their faith in God shall be confirmed and increased. When temporal mercies are made by the grace of God to be of spiritual advantage to us, and plenty for the body is so far from being an enemy (as with many it proves) that it becomes a friend to the prosperity of the soul, then they are mercies indeed to us. This is promised here, ver. 27. Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, the holy one in the midst of thee, (Isa. xl. 9.) and that I am the Lord your God and none else. As it proves that the Lord is God, and there is none other, because he rounds, and he heals, he forms light and darkness, he doth good and evil, Isa. xlv. 7. Deut. xxxii. 39. So it proves him to be the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, and a father to them; that as a father he both corrects them when they offend, and comforts them when they repent. It was the burden of the threatenings in Ezekiel's prophecy, such and such evils I will bring upon you, and ye shall know that I am the Lord: and the same is here made the crown of the promises; you shall eat and be satisfied, and rejoice, and thus ye shall know that I am the Lord. Note, We should labour to grow in our acquaintance with God by all providences, both merciful and afflictive. When God gives to his people plenty, and peace and joy upon their return to him, he thereby gives them to understand, that he is pleased with their repentance, that he has pardoned their sins, and that he is theirs as much as ever; that they are taken into the same covenant with him, for he is the Lord their God, and into the same communion, for he is in the midst of them; nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for, and as the sun in the centre of the worlds, &c. in the midst of them, as to diffuse his benign influences to all the parts of his land.

3. Even the inferior creatures shall share in it, and be made easy by it. Fear not, O land, ver. 21. Be not afraid ye beasts of the field, ver. 22. They had suffered for the sin of man, and for God's quarrel with him, and now they shall fare the better for man's repentance, and God's reconciliation to him. Nay, the beasts were said to cry unto God, chap. i. 20. and now that cry is answered, and they are bid not to be afraid, for they shall have plenty of all that which their nature craves. God in sparing Nineveh had an eye to the cattle, Jonah iv. 10. for the cattle had fared, chap. iii. 8. This may lead us to think of the restitution of all things, when the creature that is now made subject to vanity, and groans under it, shall be brought, though not into the glorious joy, yet into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 21.



28. ¶ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; 29. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

The promises of corn and wine and oil, in the foregoing verses, would be very acceptable to a wasted country, but here we are taught, that we must not rest in those things; God has reserved some better things for us, and these verses have reference to those better things; both the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory, and the happiness of true believers in both. We are here told,

1. How the kingdom of grace shall be introduced by a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, ver. 28, 29. We are not to seek for the meaning of this promise nor in doubt what it refers to, and wherein it had its accomplishment, for the apostle Peter has given us an infallible explication and application of it, assuring us that when the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, at the day of Pentecost, *Acts ii. 1, &c.* that that was the very thing which was spoken of here by the prophet Joel, ver. 16, 17. That was the gift of the Spirit, which according to this prediction was to come, and we are not to look for any other, no more than for another accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. Now, (1.) The blessing itself here promised is the pouring out of the Spirit of God, his gifts, graces, and comforts, which the blessed Spirit is the author of. We often read in the Old Testament of the Spirit of the Lord coming by drops, as it were, upon the judges and prophets whom God raised up for extraordinary services, but now the Spirit shall be poured out plentifully in a full stream; as was promised with an eye to gospel-times, *Isa. xlv. 3. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.* (2.) The time fixed for this is afterwards, after the fulfilling of the foregoing promises, this shall be fulfilled. St. Peter expounds this of the last days, the days of the Messiah, by whom the world was to have its last revelation of the divine will and grace in the last days of the Jewish church, a little before its dissolution. (3.) The extent of this blessing in respect of the persons on whom it shall be bestowed; the Spirit shall be poured out upon *all flesh*, i. e. not as hitherto upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles also; for in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, *Rom. x. 11, 12.* Hitherto divine revelation was confined to the seed of Abraham, none but those of the land of Israel had the Spirit of prophecy, but in the last days *all flesh shall see the glory of God*, *Isa. xl. 5.* and shall come to worship before him, *Isa. lxvi. 23.* The Jews understand it of all flesh in the land of Israel, and Peter himself did not fully understand it as speaking of the Gentiles, till he saw it accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his friends, who were Gentiles, *Acts x. 44, 45.* which was but a continuation of that same gift which was bestowed on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit shall be poured out upon *all flesh*, i. e. upon all those whose hearts are made hearts of flesh, soft and tender, and so prepared to receive the impressions and influences of the Holy Ghost. Upon *all flesh*, i. e. upon some of all sorts of men; the gifts of the Spirit shall not be so sparing, or so much confined as they have been, but shall be more general and diffusive of themselves. (1.) The Spirit shall be poured out upon some of each sex, not your sons only; but your daughters shall prophesy; we read of four sisters in one family that were prophetesses, *Acts xxi. 9.* Not the parents only, but the children shall be filled with the Spirit; which intimates the continuance of this gift for some ages successively in the church. (2.) Upon some of each age; your old men that are past their vigour, and whose spirits begin to decay, your young men that have yet but little acquaintance with and experience of divine things, yet they shall dream dreams, and see visions, i. e. God will reveal himself by dreams and visions both to young and old. (3.) Upon those of the meanest rank and condition; even upon the servants and the handmaids; the Jewish doctors say, that prophecy doth not reside on any, but such as are wise, valiant, and rich, not upon the soul of a poor man, or a man in sorrow; but in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, *Gal. iii. 28.* There were many that were called being servants, *1 Cor. vii. 21.* but that was no obstruction to their receiving the Holy Ghost. (4.) The effect of this blessing, they shall prophesy; they shall receive new discoveries of divine things, and that not for their own use only, but for the benefit of the church. They shall interpret scripture, and speak of things secret, distant, and future, which by the utmost sagacities of reason, and their natural powers, they could not have any insight into or foresight of. By these extraordinary gifts the Christian church was first founded and set up, and the Scriptures written, and ministry settled, by which, with the ordinary operations and influences of the Spirit, it was to be afterwards maintained and kept up.

2. How the kingdom of glory shall be introduced by the universal change of nature, ver. 30, 31. The pouring out of the Spirit will be very comfortable to the righteous; but let the unrighteous hear this and tremble. There is a great and terrible day of the Lord coming, which shall be ushered in with wonders in heaven and earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood. This is to have its full accomplishment (as the learned Dr. Pococke thinks) in the day of judgment at the end of time, before which these signs will be performed in the letter of them, yet so as that it was accomplished in part in the death of Christ, which is called the judgment of this world, when the earth quaked and the sun was darkened, and a great and terrible day it was; and more fully in the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a type and figure of the general judgment, and before which there were many amazing prodigies, besides the convulsions of states and kingdoms prophesied of under the figurative expressions of turning the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the tears and rumours of wars, and distress of nations which our Saviour spoke of as the beginning of these sorrows, *Matt. xxiv. 6, 7.* But before the last judgment there will be wonders indeed in heaven and earth, the dissolution of both without a metaphor. The judgments of God upon a sinful world, and the frequent destruction of wicked kingdoms by fire and sword, are prodages to and prodages of the judgment of the world at the last day. Those on whom the Spirit is poured out, shall foresee and forget that great and terrible day of the Lord, and expound the wonders in heaven and earth, that go before it; for as to his first coming, so to his second did and do all the prophets bear witness, *Rev. x. 7.*

3. The safety and happiness of all true believers both in the first and second coming of Jesus Christ, ver. 32. This speaks of particular persons, for to them the New Testament has more respect, and less to kingdoms and nations than the Old.

Now observe here,

1. That there is a salvation wrought out; though the day of the Lord will be great and terrible, yet in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance from the terror of it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, who knows how to separate between the precious and the vile, in the everlasting gospel, which went from Zion, in the church of the first-born, typified by mount Zion, and which is the Jerusalem that is from above, there is deliverance; a way of escaping the wrath to come is found out and laid open. Christ is himself not only the Saviour but the salvation; he is so to the ends of the earth. This deliverance laid up for us in the covenant of grace is in performance of the promises made to the fathers, there shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said. See *Luke i. 72.* Note, This is ground of comfort and hope to sinners, that whatever danger there is in their case, there is also deliverance, deliverance for them if it be not their own fault. And if we would share in this deliverance, we must apply ourselves to the gospel Zion, to God's Jerusalem.

2. That there is a remnant that are interested in this salvation, and for whom the deliverance is wrought. It is in that remnant, i. e. among them that the deliverance is; or in them, i. e. in their souls and spirits, there are the earnest and evidences of it; Christ in you the hope of glory. They are called a remnant, because they are but a few in comparison with the multitudes that are left to perish; a little remnant, but a chosen one, a remnant according to the election of grace. And here we are told who they are that shall be delivered in the great day. (1.) Those that sincerely call upon God. Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, whether Jew or Gentile, (for the apostle expounds it so, *Rom. x. 13.* where he lays this down as the great rule of the gospel by which we must all be judged) shall be delivered. This calling on God supposeth knowledge of him, faith in him, desire towards him, dependence on him, and as an evidence of the sincerity of all this, a conscientious obedience to him; for without that, crying Lord, Lord, will not stand us in any stead. Note, It is the praying remnant that shall be the saved remnant. And it will aggravate the ruin of those who perish, that they might have been saved on such easy terms. (2.) Those that are effectually called to God. The deliverance is fore to the remnant whom the Lord shall call; not only with the common call of the gospel, with which many are called that are not chosen; but with a special call into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, whom the Lord predestinates or prepares for the Chaldees. St. Peter borrows this phrase, *Acts ii. 39.* Note, Those only shall be delivered in the great day that are now effectually called from sin to God, itself to Christ, from things below to things above.

### CHAP. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had a gracious promise of deliverance in mount Zion and Jerusalem; now this whole chapter is a comment upon that promise, shewing what that deliverance shall be, how it shall be wrought by the destruction of the church's enemies, and how it shall be perfected in the everlasting rest and joy of the church. This was in part accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from the attempt that Sennacherib made upon it in Hezekiah's time, and afterwards in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, and other deliverances wrought for the Jewish church betwixt that and Christ's coming. But it has a further reference to the great redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, and the destruction of our spiritual enemies, and all their agents, and will have its full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day. Here is a prediction, (1.) Of God's reckoning with the enemies of his people for all the injuries and indignities that they had done them, and returning them upon their own head, ver. 1—8. (2.) Of God's judging all nations when the measure of their iniquity is full, and appearing publicly to the everlasting confusion of all impatient sinners, and the everlasting comfort of all his faithful servants, ver. 9—17. (3.) Of the provision God has made for the refreshment of his people, for their safety and purity, when their enemies shall be made desolate, ver. 18—21. These promises were not of private interpretation only, but were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of this scripture might have hope.

1. FOR, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah, and Jerusalem. 2. I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. 3. And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink. 4. Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompense? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head; 5. Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things: 6. The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. 7. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head: 8. And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it.

We have often heard of the year of the redemption, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion; now here we have a description of the transactions of that year, and a prophecy of what shall be done when it comes, whenever it comes, for it comes often, and at the end of time it will come once for all.

1. It shall be the year of the redemption, for God will bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 1. Though the bondage of God's people may



may be grievous and very long, yet it shall not be everlasting. That in Egypt ended at length in their deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God; *let my son go that he may serve me.* That in Babylon shall likewise end well. And the Lord Jesus will provide for the effectual redemption of poor captivated souls from under the dominion of sin and Satan, and will proclaim that *acceptable year*, the year of jubilee, the release of debts and servants, and the *opening of the prison to them that were bound.* There is a *day*, there is a *time*, fixed for the *bringing again of the captivity* of God's children, for the redeeming of them from the power of the grave, and it shall be the *last day*, and the *period of all time.*

2. It shall be the *year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.* Though God may suffer the enemies of his people to prevail against them very far and for a long time, yet he will call them to an account for it, and will lead captivity captive, *Psal. lxxviii. 18.* will lead those captive that led his people captive, *Rev. xiii. 10.* Observe,

1. Who they are that shall be reckoned with; *all nations*, ver. 2. This intimates, (1.) That *all the nations* had made themselves liable to the judgment of God for wrong done to his people. Persecution is the reigning crying sin of the world, that lying in wickedness itself is set against godliness. The enmity that is in the old serpent, the *god of this world*, against the seed of the woman, appears more or less in the children of this world. *Marvel not if the world hate you.* (2.) That whatever nation injured God's nation, they should not go unpunished; for he that toucheth the Israel of God, shall be made to know that he toucheth the apple of his eye. Jerusalem will be a *burdensome stone to all people*, *Zech. xii. 3.* But the neighbour-nations shall be particularly reckoned with. *Tyre and Sidon and all the coast of Palestine*, or the Philistines, who had been troublesome neighbours to the Israel of God, ver. 4. when the more remote and potent nations that laid Israel waste, are reckoned with, the impotent malice of these that lay near them, and *helped forward the affliction*, *Zech. i. 15.* and made a hand of it, *Ezek. xxvi. 2.* shall not be passed by. Note, Little persecutors shall be called to an account as well as great ones; and though they could not do much mischief, shall be reckoned with according to the *wickedness of their endeavours*, and the mischief they would have done.

2. The fitting of this court for judgment. They shall all be gathered, ver. 2. That they who have combined together against God's people, with one consent, *Psal. lxxxiii. 5.* may together receive their doom. They shall be brought down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, which lay near Jerusalem and there God will plead with them. (1.) Because it is fit that criminals should be tried in the same country where they did the fact. (2.) For their greater confusion, when they shall see that Jerusalem which they have so long endeavoured and hoped for the ruin of, in spite of all their rage, made a *praise in the earth.* (3.) For the greater comfort and honour of God's Jerusalem, which shall see God pleading their cause. (4.) Then shall be related what God did for Jehoshaphat, when he gave him victory over those that invaded him, and furnished him and his people with matter of joy and praise, in the valley of Berachab. See *2 Chron. xx. 26.* (5.) It was in this valley of Jehoshaphat (as Dr. Lightfoot suggests) that Sennacherib's army, or part of it lay, when it was destroyed by an angel. They came together to ruin Jerusalem, but God brought them together for their own ruin, *as sheaves in the floor*, *Micah iv. 12.*

3. The plaintiff called, on whose behalf this prosecution is set on foot: it is for my people, and for my heritage Israel. It is their cause that God will now plead with jealousy. Note, God's people are his heritage, his peculiar, his portion, his treasure, above all people, *Exod. xix. 5.* *Deut. xxxii. 9.* They are his demesne, and therefore he has a good action against those that trespass upon them.

4. The charge exhibited against them, which is very particular. Many affronts they had put upon God by their idolatries; but that for which God has a quarrel with them, is the affronts they have put upon his people and upon the vessels of his sanctuary.

(1.) They had been very abusive to the people of Israel, had scattered them among the nations, and forced them to seek for shelter where they could find a place, or carried them captives into their respective countries, and there industriously dispersed them, for fear of their incorporating for their common safety. They parted their land, and took every one his share of it as their own; nay, they have cast lots for my people, and sold them. When they had taken them prisoners, (1.) They made a jest of them, made a scorn of them as of no value, whom they would not release, and yet thought them not worth the keeping; they made nothing of playing them away at dice, or they make a dividend of the prisoners by lot, as the soldiers did of Christ's garments. (2.) They made a gain of them, when they had them they sold them, yet with so much contempt that they did not increase their wealth by their price, but sold them for their pleasure rather than their profit; they gave a boy taken in war for the hire of a harlot, and a girl for so many bottles of wine as would serve them for one sitting: a goodly price at which they valued them, and goodly preferment for a son and daughter of Israel, to be a slave and a drudge in a tavern or a bawdy-house. Observe here, how that which is got by one sin is commonly spent upon another. The spoil which these enemies of the Jews gathered by injustice and violence, they scattered and throw away in drinking and revelling; such is the character many times, and such the conversation, of the enemies and persecutors of the people of God. The Tyrians and Philistines, when they seized any of the children of Judah and Jerusalem, either took them prisoners in war or kidnapped them, they sold them to the Grecians, with whom the men of Tyre traded in the persons of men, *Ezek. xxvii. 13.* that they might remove them far from their own border, ver. 6. It was a great reproach to Israel, God's first-born his free-born, to be thus bought and sold among the heathen.

(2.) They had unjustly seized God's silver and gold, ver. 5. By which some understand the wealth of Israel. The silver and gold which God's people had he calls his, because they had received it from him and devoted it to him; and whosoever robbed them, God took it as if they had robbed him, and would make reprisals accordingly. Those that take away the estates of good men for well-doing, will be found guilty of sacrilege, they take God's silver and gold. But it seems rather to be meant of the vessels and treasures of the temple, which God here calls his *goodly pleasant things*, precious and desirable to him and all that are his. These they carried into their temples as trophies of their victory over God's Israel, thinking thereby they triumphed over Israel's God, nay, and that their idols triumphed over him. Thus the ark was put in Dagon's temple. Thus they did unjustly, what have you to do with me? ver. 4. i. e. with my people; what wrong have they done you? What provocation have they given you? You had nothing to do with them, and yet you do all this against them. Devils are devised against the quiet in the land, and those offended and harmed that are harmless and harmless: *Will you render me a recompense?* Can they pretend that either God or his people have done them any injury, for which they may justify themselves by the law of retaliation, in doing them these mischiefs? No, they have no colour for it. Note, It is no new thing for those that have been very civil and obliging to their neighbours, yet to find them very unkind and un-neighbourly; and for those who do no injuries, yet to suffer many.

5. The sentence passed upon them. In general, ver. 4. *If ye recompense me*, if you pretend a quarrel with me, if you provoke me thus to jealousy, if you touch the apple of mine eye, *I will swiftly and speedily return your recompense upon your own head.* Those that contend with God will find themselves unable to make their part good with him. He will recompense them suddenly when they little think of it, and have not time to prevent it; if he take them to task, he will soon effect their ruin. Particularly it is threatened, (1.) That they shall not gain their end in the mischief they designed against God's people. They thought to have removed them far from their border that they should never return to it again, ver. 6. But (saith God) *I will raise them out of the place whither you have sold them*, and they shall not, as you intended, be buried alive there. Men's selling the people of God will not deprive him of his property in them. (2.) That they shall be paid in their own coin, as Adonibezek was, ver. 8. *I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah*, you shall lie as much at their mercy, as they have been at yours, *Ira. ix. 14.* Thus the Jews had rule over them that hated them, *Ezra ix. 1.* And then they shall justly be sold to the Sabeans, to a people far off. This (some think) had its accomplishment in the victories obtained by the Maccabees over the enemies of the Jews; others think it looks as far forward as the last day, when the upright shall have dominion, *Psal. xlix. 14.* and the saints shall judge the world. It is certain, none ever hardened his heart against God, or his church, and prospered long: no, not Pharaoh himself, for the Lord hath spoken it, for the comfort of all his suffering servants, that *vengeance is his, and he will repay.*

9. ¶ Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: 10. Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. 11. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. 12. Let the heathen be weakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all ye heathen round about. 13. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. 14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. 17. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

What the Psalmist had long before ordered to be said among the heathen, *Psal. xvi. 10.* the prophet here will have in like manner to be published to all nations, that *the Lord reigns*, and that *he comes*, *he comes to judge the earth*, as he had long been judging in the earth. The notice here given of God's judging the nations, may have reference to the destruction of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and to the Antichrist especially and all the proud enemies of the Christian church; but some of the best interpreters, ancient and modern (particularly the learned Dr. Pocock) think the scope of these verses is to set forth the day of the last judgment, under the similitude of God's making war upon the enemies of his kingdom and his gathering in the harvest of the earth, both which similitudes we find used in the Revelation, *chap. xix. 11.—xiv. 18.* Here we have,

1. A challenge given to all the enemies of God's kingdom, to do their worst; to signify to them that God is preparing war against them, they are called upon to prepare war against him, ver. 9, 10, 11. When the hour of God's judgment is come, effectual methods shall be taken to gather all nations to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, *Rev. xvi. 14.—xx. 8.* It seems to be here spoken ironically, *Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles*; let all the forces of the nations be summoned to join in confederacy against God and his people. It is like that, *Ira. viii. 9.* *Associate yourselves, O ye people, and gird yourselves, but ye shall be broken to pieces, prepare war, muster up all your strength, wake up the mighty men, call them into your service, excite them to vigilance and resolution; let all the men of war draw near, let them come and enter the lists with omnipotence if they dare; let them not complain for want of weapons, but let them beat their ploughshares into swords, and their pruning-hooks into spears.* Let them resolve, if they will, never to return to their husbandry again, but either to conquer or die: let none plead unfitness to bear arms, but let the weak say, *I am strong*, and will venture into the field of battle. Thus doth a God of almighty power bid defiance to all the opposition of the powers of darkness; let the heathen rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel together against the Lord and his Christ; let them assemble and come, and gather themselves together; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them, and while he thus calls them, has them in derision, *Psal. ii. 1—5.* The heathen must be awakened, must be raised from the dead, that they may come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat to receive their doom, ver. 12. may come up out of their graves, come up into the air, to meet the Lord there Jehoshaphat signifies the judgment of the Lord. Let them come to the place of God's judgment, which perhaps is the chief reason for the using of this name here, but it is put together as a proper name for the sake of allusions to the place so called, which we observed before, let them come thither where God will sit to judge the heathen, to that throne of glory before which shall be gathered all nations, *Matth. xxv. 32.* for before the judgment seat of Christ we must all appear. The challenge, ver. 9. is turned into a summons, ver. 13. It is not only *come if you dare*, but *you shall come* whether you will or no, for there is no escaping the judgments of God.

2. A charge given to the ministers of God's justice to appear and act against these daring enemies of his kingdom among men. And therefore cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord, ver. 11, when they bring their forces into the field, let God bring his, let the archangel's trumpet sound a charge to call together his mighty ones, i. e. his angels. Perhaps it is with reference to this that Christ's coming from heaven at the last day is said to be with his mighty angels, *2 Thess. i. 7.* These are the hosts of the Lord



Lord that shall fight his battles then when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, when he shall judge among the heathen, Psalm cx. 5. Some think these words, ver. 9, 10. *Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, are not a challenge to the enemy's hosts, but a charge to God's hosts, let them draw near, and come up.* When God's cause is to be pleaded, either by the law, or by the sword, he hath those ready that shall plead it effectually; witnesses ready to appear for him in the court of judgment, soldiers ready to appear for him in the field of battle. They shall beat plough-shares into swords, if need be. However, it is plain to them the charge is given, ver. 13. *Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe;* that is, *their wickedness is great, the measure of it is full, and they are ripe for ruin.* Our Saviour has expounded this, Matt. xiii. 39. *The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.* And they are commanded to thrust in their sickle, their sharp sickle, and gather in both the harvest and the vintage, Rev. xiv. 15—18. Note, The greatness of men's wickedness makes them ripe for God's judgment.

3. The vast appearance that shall be in that great and solemn day; ver. 14. *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, the same which before was called the valley of Jehoshaphat, or of the Judgment of the Lord, for the day of the Lord is near in that valley.* Note, 1. The judgment day, that day of the Lord, has all along been looked upon, and spoken of as *nigh at hand.* Enoch said, *Behold the Lord comes, as if the judge were then standing before the door; because it is certain that day will come, and will come according to the appointment, and a thousand years with God are but as one day;* things are ripening apace for it; we ought always to be ready for it, because our judgment is at hand. 2. The day of judgment will be the day of decision, when every man's eternal state will be determined, and the controversy that has been long depending between the kingdom of Christ and that of Satan shall be finally decided, and an end put to the struggle. *The valley of the distribution of judgment, so the Chaldee, when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body. The valley of threshing, so the margin, carrying on the metaphor of the harvest, ver. 13. The proud enemies of God's people will then be crushed and broken to pieces, and made as the dust of the summer threshing-floors.* 3. Innumerable multitudes will be gathered together to receive their final doom in that day. As in the destruction of Gog we read of the valley of Hamon Gog, and the city of Hamonah, Ezek. xxxix. 15—16. both signifying the multitude of the vanquished enemies; it is the word here used, *Hamonim, Hamonim*, expressed by way of admiration. O what vast multitudes of sinners will divine justice be glorified in the ruin of at that day! *A multitude of living* (saith one of the rabbins) *and a multitude of dead, for Christ shall come to judge both the quick and the dead.*

4. The amazing change that shall then be made in the kingdom of nature, ver. 15. *The sun and moon shall be darkened;* as before, chap. ii. 31. Their glory and lustre shall be eclipsed by the far greater brightness of that glory, in which the Judge shall then appear. Nay, they shall themselves be set aside in the dissolution of all things; for damned sinners in hell shall not be allowed their light, being cast into utter darkness; and glorified saints in heaven shall not need their light, for God himself will be their everlasting light, Isa. lx. 19. Those that fall under the wrath of God in that day of wrath, shall be cut off from all comfort and joy, signified by the darkening not only of sun and moon, but of the stars also.

5. The different impressions which that day will make upon the children of this world, and the children of God, according as it will be to them.

1. To the wicked it will be a terrible day. *The Lord shall then speak from Zion and Jerusalem, i. e. from the throne of his glory, from heaven, where he manifests himself in a peculiar manner, as sometimes he had done in the glorious high throne of his sanctuary, which yet was but a faint resemblance of the glory of that day. He shall speak from heaven, from the midst of his saints and angels (so some understand it) the holy society of which may be called Zion and Jerusalem, for when we come to the heavenly Jerusalem we come to the innumerable company of angels, see Heb. xii. 22—23. Now his speaking in that day will be to the wicked as roaring, terrible as the roaring of a lion, for so the word signifies; he long kept silence, but now our God shall come and shall not keep silence, Psalm i. 3—21. Note, the judgment of the great day, will make the ears of those to tingle that continue the implacable enemies of God's kingdom. God's voice will then shake terribly both heaven and earth, Hag. ii. 6. Heb. xii. 26. This notes that the voice of God will in the great day speak such terror to the wicked, as were enough to put even heaven and earth into a consternation. When God comes to pull down and destroy his enemies, and make them all his footstool, though heaven and earth should stand up in defence of them, and undertake their protection, it shall be all in vain, even they shall shake before him, and be an insufficient shelter to those whom he comes forth to contend with. Note, As blessings out of Zion are the sweetest blessings, and enough to make heaven and earth sing, so terrors out of Zion are the foreboding terrors, and enough to make heaven and earth shake.*

2. To the righteous it will be a joyful day. When heaven and earth shall tremble, and be dissolved and burnt up, then will the Lord be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel, ver. 16. and then Jerusalem be holy, ver. 17. The saints are the Israel of God, they are his people, the church is his Jerusalem, they are in covenant and communion with him, now in the great day. (1.) Their longings shall be satisfied. *The Lord will be the hope of his people, i. e. as he always was the founder and foundation of their hopes, so he then will be the crown of their hopes.* He will be the harbour of his people, so the word is, their *receptacle, refuge and home.* The saints in the great day shall arrive at the desired haven, shall put to shore after a stormy voyage; they shall go to be for ever at home with God; to their Father's house, the house *not made with hands.* (2.) Their happiness shall be confirmed; God will be in that day the strength of the children of Israel, enabling them to bid that day welcome, and to bear up under the weight of its glories and joys to them. In this world when the judgments of God are abroad, and sinners are falling under them, God is and will be the hope and strength of his people: the strength of their heart and their portion, when other men's hearts fail them for fear. (3.) Their holiness shall be completed, ver. 17. *Then shall Jerusalem be holy, the holy city indeed, such shall the heavenly Jerusalem be, such the glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.* Jerusalem shall be holiness, so the word is, it shall be perfectly holy, there shall be no remainder of sin in it. The gospel-church is a holy society, even in its militant state, but will be never holiness itself, till it comes to be triumphant. Then, *no stranger shall pass through her any more, i. e. there shall not enter into the new Jerusalem any thing that defiles or works iniquity; none shall be there but who have a right to be there, none but its own citizens: for it shall be an unmixed society.* (4.) God shall in all this be manifested and magnified. *So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God.* By the sanctifying and glorifying of the church, God will be known in his holiness and glory, as the God that dwells in his holy mountain, and makes it holy by dwelling in it; and they that are sanctified and glorified, are so through the knowledge of him that called them. The knowledge which true believers

have of God, is, (1.) An appropriate knowledge; they know that he is the Lord their God, yet not their's only, but their's in common with the whole church, that he is their God, but dwelling in Zion his holy mountain; for though faith appropriates, it doth not ingross or monopolize the privileges of the covenant. (2.) It is an experimental knowledge. They shall find him their hope and strength in the worst of times, and so they shall know that he is the Lord their God. These know best the goodness of God, who have tasted and seen it, and have found him good to them.

18. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. 19. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. 20. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. 21. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

These promises with which this prophecy concludes, have their accomplishment in part, in the kingdom of grace; and the comforts and graces of all the faithful subjects of that kingdom, but will have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of glory, for as to the Jewish church, we know not of any event concerning that, which answers the extent of these promises; and what instances of peace and prosperity they were blessed with, which these may be supposed to be a hyperbolical description of, they were but figures of better things reserved for us, that they in their best estate without us might not be made perfect.

1. It is promised that the enemies of the church shall be vanquished and brought down, ver. 19. Egypt, that old enemy of Israel, and Edom that had an inveterate enmity to Israel, derived from Esau, these shall be a desolation, a desolate wilderness, no more to be inhabited, they are become the people of God's curse, so the Idumeans were, Isa. xxxiv. 5. No strength or wealth of a nation, is fence against the judgments of God. But what is the quarrel God has with these potent kingdoms? It is for their violence against the children of Judah, and the injuries they had done them; see Ezek. xxv. 3—8—12—15—xxvi. 2. They had shed the innocent blood of the Jews that fled to them for shelter, or were making their escape through their country. Note, The innocent blood of God's people is very precious to him, and not a drop of it shall be shed, but it shall be reckoned for. In the last day, this earth which has been filled with violence against the people of God, shall be made a desolation, when it and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. And sooner or later, the oppressors and persecutors of God's Israel will be brought down and laid in the dust, nay, they will at length be brought down and laid in the flames.

2. It is promised that the church shall be very happy, and truly happy it is in spiritual privileges, even during its militant state, but much more when it comes to be triumphant. Three things are here promised it.

1. Purity. That is put last here as a reason for the rest, ver. 21. But we may consider it first as the ground and foundation of the rest. *I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, i. e. their bloody heinous sins especially shedding innocent blood; that filth and guilt they had contracted by sin, which rendered them unfit for communion with God, and made them odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice; this they shall be washed from in the fountain opened, Zech. xiii. 1. That shall be cleansed by the blood of Christ, which could not be cleansed by the sacrifices and purifications of the ceremonial law. Or if we apply it to the happiness of the future state, it speaks the cleansing of the saints from all these corruptions from which they were not cleansed, either by ordinances or providences in this world; there shall not be the least remains of sin in them there. Here though they are washing daily, yet still there is something that is not cleansed; but in heaven, even that also shall be done away. And the reason is, because the Lord dwells in Zion, dwells with his church, and much more gloriously with that in heaven, and holiness becomes his house for ever, for which reason, where he dwells there must be, there shall be, a perfection of holiness. Note, Though the refining and reforming of the church is work that goes on slowly, and still there is something we complain of that is not cleansed, yet there is a day coming, when every thing that is amiss shall be amended, and the church shall be all fair, and no spot, no stain in her; and we must wait for that day.*

2. Plenty; ver. 18. That is put first, because it speaks the reverse of the judgment threatened in the foregoing chapters. (1.) The streams of this plenty overflow the land, and enrich it; *The mountains shall drop new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk,* such great abundance shall they have of suitable provision, both for babes and strong men. It speaks the abundance of vineyards, and all fruitful; and the abundance of cattle in the pastures that fill them with milk. And to make the corn-land fruitful, the rivers of Judah shall flow with water, so that the country shall be like the garden of Eden, well watered every where, and greatly enriched, Psalm lxxv. 9. But this seems to be meant spiritually; the graces and comforts of the new covenant are compared to wine and milk, Isa. lv. 1. And the Spirit to rivers of living water, John vii. 38. And these gifts abound much more under the New Testament, than they did under the Old; when believers receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, when they are enriched with everlasting consolations, and filled with joy and peace in believing, then the mountains drop new wine, and the hills flow with milk; Drink ye, drink abundantly, O beloved. When there is a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace, then the rivers of Judah flow with water, and make glad not only the city of our God, Psalm xvi. 4. but the whole land. (2.) The fountain of this plenty is in the house of God, thence the streams take their rise; as those waters of the sanctuary, Ezek. xlvii. 1. from under the threshold of the house, and the river of life out of the throne of God and the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1. The Apostle speaking of Zion, saith, *All my springs are in thee,* Psalm lxxxvii. 7. Those that take temporal blessings to be made in the former part of the verse, yet by this fountain out of the house of the Lord, understand the grace of God, which if we abound in temporal blessings, we have so much the more need of, that we may not abuse them. Christ himself is this fountain, his merit and grace cleanse us, refresh us, and make us fruitful. This here is said to water the valley of Shittim, which lay a great way off from the temple at Jerusalem, on the other side of Jordan, and was a dry and barren valley; which intimates, that gospel-grace flowing from Christ shall reach far, even to the Gentile world, to the most remote regions of it, and shall make them to abound in the fruits of righteousness, which had long lain as the barren wilderness. This grace is a fountain overflowing, ever flowing, from which we may be continually drawing, and yet need not fear



may be grievous and very long, yet it shall not be everlasting. That in Egypt ended at length in their deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God; *let my son go that he may serve me.* That in Babylon shall likewise end well. And the Lord Jesus will provide for the effectual redemption of poor captivated souls from under the dominion of sin and Satan, and will proclaim that *acceptable year*, the year of jubilee, the release of debts and servants, and the *opening of the prison to them that were bound.* There is a day, there is a time, fixed for the bringing again of the captivity of God's children, for the redeeming of them from the power of the grave, and it shall be the *last day*, and the *period of all time.*

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1. Who they are that shall be reckoned with; *all nations*, ver. 2. This intimates, (1.) That *all the nations* had made themselves liable to the judgment of God for wrong done to his people. Persecution is the reigning crying sin of the world, that lying in wickedness itself is set against godliness. The enmity that is in the old serpent, the *god of this world*, against the seed of the woman, appears more or less in the children of this world. *Marvel not if the world hate you.* (2.) That whatever nation injured God's nation, they should not go unpunished; for he that toucheth the Israel of God, shall be made to know that he toucheth the apple of his eye. Jerusalem will be a *burdensome stone to all people*, *Zech. xii. 3.* But the neighbour-nations shall be particularly reckoned with. *Tyre and Sidon and all the coast of Palestine*, or the Philistines, who had been troublesome neighbours to the Israel of God, ver. 4. when the more remote and potent nations that laid Israel waste, are reckoned with, the impotent malice of these that lay near them, and *helped forward the affliction*, *Zech. i. 15.* and made a hand of it, *Ezek. xxvi. 2.* shall not be passed by. Note, Little persecutors shall be called to an account as well as great ones; and though they could not do much mischief, shall be reckoned with according to the *wickedness of their endeavours*, and the mischief they would have done.

2. The sitting of this court for judgment. They shall all be gathered, ver. 2. That they who have combined together against God's people, with one consent, *Psal. lxxxiii. 5.* may together receive their doom. They shall be brought down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, which lay near Jerusalem and there God will plead with them. (1.) Because it is fit that criminals should be tried in the same country where they did the fact. (2.) For their greater confusion, when they shall see that Jerusalem which they have so long endeavoured and hoped for the ruin of, in spite of all their rage, made a praise in the earth. (3.) For the greater comfort and honour of God's Jerusalem, which shall see God pleading their cause. (4.) Then shall be repeated what God did for Jehoshaphat, when he gave him victory over those that invaded him, and furnished him and his people with matter of joy and praise, in the valley of Berachah. See 2 Chron. xx. 26. (5.) It was in this valley of Jehoshaphat (as Dr. Lightfoot suggests) that Sennacherib's army, or part of it lay, when it was destroyed by an angel. They came together to ruin Jerusalem, but God brought them together for their own ruin, as *sheaves in the floor*, *Micah iv. 12.*

3. The plaintiff called, on whose behalf this prosecution is set on foot: it is for my people, and for my heritage Israel. It is their cause that God will now plead with jealousy. Note, God's people are his heritage, his peculiar, his portion, his treasure, above all people, *Ezek. xix. 5, Deut. xxxii. 9.* They are his demesne, and therefore he has a good action against those that trespass upon them.

4. The charge exhibited against them, which is very particular. Many affronts they had put upon God by their idolatries; but that for which God has a quarrel with them, is the affronts they have put upon his people and upon the vessels of his sanctuary.

(1.) They had been very abusive to the people of Israel, had scattered them among the nations, and forced them to seek for shelter where they could find a place, or carried them captives into their respective countries, and there industriously dispersed them, for fear of their incorporating for their common safety. They parted their land, and took every one his share of it as their own; nay, they have cast lots for my people, and sold them. When they had taken them prisoners, (1.) They made a jest of them, made a scorn of them as of no value, whom they would not release, and yet thought them not worth the keeping; they made nothing of playing them a game at dice, or they make a dividend of the prisoners by lot, as the soldiers did of Christ's garments. (2.) They made a gain of them, when they had them they sold them, yet with so much contempt that they did not increase their wealth by their price, but sold them for their pleasure rather than their profit; they gave a boy taken in war for the hire of a harlot, and a girl for so many bottles of wine as would serve them for one sitting; a goodly price at which they valued them, and goodly preferment for a son and daughter of Israel, to be a slave and a drudge in a tavern or a bawdy-house. Observe here, how that which is got by one sin is commonly spent upon another. The spoil which these enemies of the Jews gathered by injustice and violence, they scattered and threw away in drinking and whoring; such is the character many times, and such the conversation, of the enemies and persecutors of the people of God. The Tyrians and Philistines, when they seized any of the children of Judah and Jerusalem, either took them prisoners in war or kidnapped them, they sold them to the Grecians, with whom the men of Tyre traded in the persons of men, *Ezek. xxvii. 13.* that they might remove them far from their own border, ver. 6. It was a great reproach to Israel, God's first born his free-born, to be thus bought and sold among the heathen.

(2.) They had unjustly seized God's silver and gold, ver. 5. By which some understand the wealth of Israel. The silver and gold which God's people had he calls his, because they had received it from him and devoted it to him; and whosoever robbed them, God took it as if they had robbed him, and would make reprisals accordingly. Those that take away the estates of good men for well-doing, will be found guilty of sacrilege, they take God's silver and gold. But it seems rather to be meant of the vessels and treasures of the temple, which God here calls his goodly pleasant things, precious and defensible to him and all that are his. These they carried into their temples as trophies of their victory over God's Israel, thinking therein they triumphed over Israel's God, nay, and that their idols triumphed over him. Thus the ark was put in Dagon's temple. Thus they did unjustly, what have you to do with me? ver. 4. i. e. with my people; what wrong have they done you? What provocation have they given you? You had nothing to do with them, and yet you do all this against them. Devices are devised against the quiet in the land, and those offended and harmed that are harmless and inoffensive: Will you render me a recompense? Can they pretend that either God or his people have done them any injury, for which they may justify themselves by the law of retaliation, in doing them these mischiefs? No, they have no colour for it. Note, It is no new thing for those that have been very civil and obliging to their neighbours, yet to find them very unkind and un-neighbourly; and for those who do no injuries, yet to suffer many.

5. The sentence passed upon them. In general, ver. 4. If ye recompense me, if you pretend a quarrel with me, if you provoke me thus to jealously, if you touch the apple of mine eye, I will swiftly and speedily return your recompense upon your own head. Those that contend with God will find themselves unable to make their part good with him. He will recompense them suddenly when they little think of it, and have not time to prevent it; if he take them to task, he will soon effect their ruin. Particularly it is threatened, (1.) That they shall not gain their end in the mischief they designed against God's people. They thought to have removed them far from their border that they should never return to it again, ver. 6. But (saith God) I will raise them out of the place whither you have sold them, and they shall not, as you intended, be buried alive there. Men's selling the people of God will not deprive him of his property in them. (2.) That they shall be paid in their own coin, as Adonibezek was, ver. 8. I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, you shall lie as much at their mercy, as they have been at yours, *Isa. ix. 14.* Thus the Jews had rule over them that hated them, *Ezra ix. 1.* And then they shall justly be sold to the Sabaeans, to a people far off. This (some think) had its accomplishment in the victories obtained by the Maccabees over the enemies of the Jews; others think it looks as far forward as the last day, when the upright shall have dominion, *Psal. xlix. 14.* and the saints shall judge the world. It is certain, none ever hardened his heart against God, or his church, and prospered long: no, not Pharaoh himself, for the Lord hath spoken it, for the comfort of all his suffering servants, that vengeance is his, and he will repay.

9. ¶ Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: 10. Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. 11. Assemble yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. 12. Let the heathen be weakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all ye heathen round about. 13. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. 14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. 17. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

What the Psalmist had long before ordered to be said among the heathen, *Psal. xvi. 10.* the prophet here will have in like manner to be published to all nations, that the Lord reigns, and that he comes, he comes to judge the earth, as he had long been judging in the earth. The notice here given of God's judging the nations, may have reference to the destruction of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and to the Antichrist especially and all the proud enemies of the Christian church; but some of the best interpreters, ancient and modern (particularly the learned Dr. Pocock) think the scope of these verses is to set forth the day of the last judgment, under the similitude of God's making war upon the enemies of his kingdom and his gathering in the harvest of the earth, both which similitudes we find used in the Revelation, chap. xix. 11.—xiv. 18. Here we have,

1. A challenge given to all the enemies of God's kingdom, to do their worst; to signify to them that God is preparing war against them, they are called upon to prepare war against him, ver. 9, 10, 11. When the hour of God's judgment is come, effectual methods shall be taken to gather all nations to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, *Rev. xvi. 14.—xx. 8.* It seems to be here spoken ironically, Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; let all the forces of the nations be summoned to join in confederacy against God and his people. It is like that, *Isa. viii. 9.* Associate yourselves, O ye people, and gird yourselves, but ye shall be broken to pieces, prepare war, muster up all your strength, wake up the mighty men, call them into your service, excite them to vigilance and resolution; let all the men of war draw near, let them come and enter the lists with omnipotence if they dare; let them not complain for want of weapons, but let them beat their ploughshares into swords, and their pruning hooks into spears. Let them resolve, if they will, never to return to their husbandry again, but either to conquer or die: let none plead unsuitness to bear arms, but let the weak say, I am strong, and will venture into the field of battle. Thus doth a God of almighty power bid defiance to all the opposition of the powers of darkness; let the heathen rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel together against the Lord and his Christ; let them assemble and come, and gather themselves together; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them, and while he thus calls them, has them in derision, *Psal. ii. 1—5.* The heathen must be weakened, must be raised from the dead, that they may come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat to receive their doom, ver. 12. may come up out of their graves, come up into the air, to meet the Lord there Jehoshaphat signifies the judgment of the Lord. Let them come to the place of God's judgment, which perhaps is the chief reason for the using of this name here, but it is put together as a proper name for the sake of allusions to the place so called, which we observed before, let them come thither where God will sit to judge the heathen, to that throne of glory before which shall be gathered all nations, *Matth. xxv. 32.* for before the judgment seat of Christ we must all appear. The challenge, ver. 9. is turned into a summons, ver. 12. It is not only come if you dare, but you shall come whether you will or no, for there is no escaping the judgments of God.

2. A charge given to the ministers of God's justice to appear and act against these daring enemies of his kingdom among men. And therefore cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord, ver. 11, when they bring their forces into the field, let God bring his, let the archangel's trumpet sound a charge to call together his mighty ones, i. e. his angels. Perhaps it is with reference to this that Christ's coming from heaven at the last day is said to be with his mighty angels, 2 Thess. i. 7. These are the hosts of the Lord



Lord that shall fight his battles then when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, when he shall judge among the heathen, Psalm cx. 5. Some think these words, *ver. 9, 10. Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, are not a challenge to the enemy's hosts, but a charge to God's hosts, let them draw near, and come up.* When God's cause is to be pleaded, either by the law, or by the sword, he hath those ready that shall plead it effectually; witnesses ready to appear for him in the court of judgment, soldiers ready to appear for him in the field of battle. They shall beat plough-shares into scythes, if need be. However, it is plain to them the charge is given, *ver. 13. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe*; that is, *their wickedness is great*, the measure of it is full, and they are ripe for ruin. Our Saviour has expounded this, *Matt. xiii. 39. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.* And they are commanded to thrust in their sickle, their sharp sickle, and gather in both the harvest and the vintage, *Rev. xiv. 15-18.* Note, The greatness of men's wickedness makes them ripe for God's judgment.

3. The vast appearance that shall be in that great and solemn day; *ver. 14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision*, the same which before was called the valley of *Schofaphat*, or of the *Judgment of the Lord*, for the day of the Lord is near in that valley. Note, 1. The judgment day, that day of the Lord, has all along been looked upon, and spoken of as *nigh at hand.* Enoch said, *Behold the Lord comes*, as if the judge were then standing before the door; because it is certain that day will come, and will come according to the appointment, and a thousand years with God are but as one day; things are ripening apace for it; we ought always to be ready for it, because our judgment is at hand. 2. The day of judgment will be the day of decision, when every man's eternal state will be determined, and the controversy that has been long depending between the kingdom of Christ and that of Satan shall be finally decided, and an end put to the struggle. The valley of the distribution of judgment, so the Chaldee, when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body. The valley of threshing, so the margin, carrying on the metaphor of the harvest, *ver. 13.* The proud enemies of God's people will then be crushed and broken to pieces, and made as the dust of the summer threshing floors. 3. Innumerable multitudes will be gathered together to receive their final doom in that day. As in the destruction of Gog we read of the valley of Hamon Gog, and the city of Hamonah, *Ezek. xxxix. 15-16.* both signifying the multitude of the vanquished enemies; it is the word here used, *Hamonim, Hamonim*, expressed by way of admiration. O what vast multitudes of sinners will divine justice be glorified in the ruin of at that day! A multitude of living (saith one of the rabbins) and a multitude of dead, for Christ shall come to judge both the quick and the dead.

4. The amazing change that shall then be made in the kingdom of nature, *ver. 15. The sun and moon shall be darkened*; as before, *chap. ii. 31.* Their glory and lustre shall be eclipsed by the far greater brightness of that glory, in which the Judge shall then appear. Nay, they shall themselves be set aside in the dissolution of all things; for damned sinners in hell shall not be allowed their light, being cast into utter darkness; and glorified saints in heaven shall not need their light, for God himself will be their everlasting light, *1 Jo. ix. 19.* Those that fall under the wrath of God in that day of wrath, shall be cut off from all comfort and joy, signified by the darkening not only of sun and moon, but of the stars also.

5. The different impressions which that day will make upon the children of this world, and the children of God, according as it will be to them.

1. To the wicked it will be a terrible day. The Lord shall then speak from Zion and Jerusalem, i. e. from the throne of his glory, from heaven, where he manifests himself in a peculiar manner, as sometimes he had done in the glorious high throne of his sanctuary, which yet was but a faint resemblance of the glory of that day. He shall speak from heaven, from the midst of his saints and angels (so some understand it) the holy society of which may be called Zion and Jerusalem, for when we come to the heavenly Jerusalem we come to the innumerable company of angels, see *Heb. xii. 22-23.* Now his speaking in that day will be to the wicked as roaring, terrible as the roaring of a lion, for so the word signifies; he long kept silence, but now our God shall come and shall not keep silence, *Psalm l. 3-21.* Note, the judgment of the great day, will make the ears of those to tingle that continue the implacable enemies of God's kingdom. God's voice will then shake terribly both heaven and earth, *IIag. ii. 6.* *Heb. xii. 26.* This notes that the voice of God will in the great day speak such terror to the wicked, as were enough to put even heaven and earth into a consternation. When God comes to pull down and destroy his enemies, and make them all his footstool, though heaven and earth should stand up in defence of them, and undertake their protection, it shall be all in vain, even they shall shake before him, and be an insufficient shelter to those whom he comes forth to contend with. Note, As blessings out of Zion are the sweetest blessings, and enough to make heaven and earth sing, so terrors out of Zion are the foreboding terrors, and enough to make heaven and earth shake.

2. To the righteous it will be a joyful day. When heaven and earth shall tremble, and be dissolved and burnt up, then will the Lord be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel, *ver. 16.* and then Jerusalem be holy, *ver. 17.* The saints are the Israel of God, they are his people, the church is his Jerusalem, they are in covenant and communion with him, now in the great day. (1.) Their longings shall be satisfied. The Lord will be the hope of his people, i. e. as he always was the founder and foundation of their hopes, so he then will be the crown of their hopes. He will be the harbour of his people, so the word is, their receptacle, refuge and home. The saints in the great day shall arrive at the desired haven, shall put to shore after a stormy voyage; they shall go to be for ever at home with God; to their Father's house, the house not made with hands. (2.) Their happiness shall be confirmed; God will be in that day the strength of the children of Israel, enabling them to bid that day welcome, and to bear up under the weight of its glories and joys to them. In this world when the judgments of God are abroad, and sinners are falling under them, God is and will be the hope and strength of his people: the strength of their heart and their portion, when other men's hearts fail them for fear. (3.) Their holiness shall be completed, *ver. 17. Then shall Jerusalem be holy*, the holy city indeed, such shall the heavenly Jerusalem be, such the glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Jerusalem shall be holiness, so the word is, it shall be perfectly holy, there shall be no remainder of sin in it. The gospel-church is a holy society, even in its militant state, but will be never holiness itself, till it comes to be triumphant. Then, no stranger shall pass through her any more, i. e. there shall not enter into the new Jerusalem any thing that defiles or works iniquity; none shall be there but who have a right to be there, none but its own citizens: for it shall be an unmixed society. (4.) God shall in all this be manifested and magnified. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God. By the sanctifying and glorifying of the church, God will be known in his holiness and glory, as the God that dwells in his holy mountain, and makes it holy by dwelling in it; and they that are sanctified and glorified, are so through the knowledge of him that called them. The knowledge which true believers

have of God, is, (1.) An appropriate knowledge; they know that he is the Lord their God, yet not their's only, but their's in common with the whole church, that he is their God, but dwelling in Zion his holy mountain; for though faith appropriates, it doth not ingross or monopolize the privileges of the covenant. (2.) It is an experimental knowledge. They shall find him their hope and strength in the worst of times, and so they shall know that he is the Lord their God. These know best the goodness of God, who have tasted and seen it, and have found him good to them.

18. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. 19. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. 20. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. 21. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

These promises with which this prophecy concludes, have their accomplishment in part, in the kingdom of grace; and the comforts and graces of all the faithful subjects of that kingdom, but will have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of glory, for as to the Jewish church, we know not of any event concerning that, which answers the extent of these promises; and what instances of peace and prosperity they were blessed with, which these may be supposed to be a hyperbolic description of, they were but figures of better things reserved for us, that they in their best estate without us might not be made perfect.

1. It is promised that the enemies of the church shall be vanquished and brought down, *ver. 19.* Egypt, that old enemy of Israel, and Edom that had an inveterate enmity to Israel, derived from Esau, these shall be a desolation, a desolate wilderness, no more to be inhabited, they are become the people of God's curse, so the Idumeans were, *Isa. xxxiv. 5.* No strength or wealth of a nation, is fence against the judgments of God. But what is the quarrel God has with these potent kingdoms? It is for their violence against the children of Judah, and the injuries they had done them; see *Ezek. xxv. 3-8-12-15-xxvi. 2.* They had shed the innocent blood of the Jews that fled to them for shelter, or were making their escape through their country. Note, The innocent blood of God's people is very precious to him, and not a drop of it shall be shed, but it shall be reckoned for. In the last day, this earth which has been filled with violence against the people of God, shall be made a desolation, when it and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. And sooner or later, the oppressors and persecutors of God's Israel will be brought down and laid in the dust, nay, they will at length be brought down and laid in the flames.

2. It is promised that the church shall be very happy, and truly happy it is in spiritual privileges, even during its militant state, but much more when it comes to be triumphant. Three things are here promised it.

1. Purity. That is put last here as a reason for the rest, *ver. 21.* But we may consider it first as the ground and foundation of the rest. I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, i. e. their bloody heinous sins especially shedding innocent blood; that filth and guilt they had contracted by sin, which rendered them unfit for communion with God, and made them odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice; this they shall be washed from in the fountain opened, *Zech. xiii. 1.* That shall be cleansed by the blood of Christ, which could not be cleansed by the sacrifices and purifications of the ceremonial law. Or if we apply it to the happiness of the future state, it speaks the cleansing of the saints from all these corruptions from which they were not cleansed, either by ordinances or providences in this world; there shall not be the least remains of sin in them there. Here though they are washing daily, yet still there is something that is not cleansed; but in heaven, even that also shall be done away. And the reason is, because the Lord dwells in Zion, dwells with his church, and much more gloriously with that in heaven, and holiness becomes his house for ever, for which reason, where he dwells there must be, there shall be, a perfection of holiness. Note, Though the refining and reforming of the church is work that goes on slowly, and still there is something we complain of that is not cleansed, yet there is a day coming, when every thing that is amiss shall be amended, and the church shall be all fair, and no spot, no stain in her; and we must wait for that day.

2. Plenty; *ver. 18.* That is put first, because it speaks the reverse of the judgment threatened in the foregoing chapters. (1.) The streams of this plenty overflow the land, and enrich it; The mountains shall drop down wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, such great abundance shall they have of suitable provision, both for babes and strong men. It speaks the abundance of vineyards, and all fruitful; and the abundance of cattle in the pastures that fill them with milk. And to make the corn-land fruitful, the rivers of Judah shall flow with water, so that the country shall be like the garden of Eden, well watered every where, and greatly enriched, *Psalm lxxv. 9.* But this seems to be meant spiritually; the graces and comforts of the new covenant are compared to wine and milk, *Isa. lv. 1.* And the Spirit to rivers of living water, *John vii. 38.* And these gifts abound much more under the New Testament, than they did under the Old; when believers receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, when they are enriched with everlasting consolations, and filled with joy and peace in believing, then the mountains drop down wine, and the hills flow with milk; Drink ye, drink abundantly, O beloved. When there is a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace, then the rivers of Judah flow with water, and make glad not only the city of our God, *Psalm xlii. 4.* but the whole land. (2.) The fountain of this plenty is in the house of God, thence the streams take their rise; as those waters of the sanctuary, *Ezek. xlvii. 1.* from under the threshold of the house, and the river of life out of the throne of God and the Lamb, *Rev. xxii. 1.* The Apostle speaking of Zion, saith, All my springs are in thee, *Psalm lxxxvii. 7.* Those that take temporal blessings to be meant in the former part of the verse, yet by this fountain out of the house of the Lord, understand the grace of God, which if we abound in temporal blessings, we have so much the more need of, that we may not abuse them. Christ himself is this fountain, his merit and grace cleanse us, refresh us, and make us fruitful. This here is said to water the valley of Shittim, which lay a great way off from the temple at Jerusalem, on the other side of Jordan, and was a dry and barren valley; which intimates, that gospel-grace flowing from Christ shall reach far, even to the Gentile world, to the most remote regions of it, and shall make them to abound in the fruits of righteousness, which had long lain as the barren wilderness. This grace is a fountain overflowing, ever flowing, from which we may be continually drawing, and yet need not fear



for its being *drawn dry*. This fountain comes out of the house of the Lord, for those that would partake of the promised graces and comforts, must diligently and constantly attend upon instituted ordinances. And from the house of the Lord above, from his temple in heaven, flows all that good which here we are daily tasting the streams of, but hope to be *shortly*, hope to be *eternally*, drinking at the fountain head of.

3. *Perpetuity*. This crowns all the rest, *ver. 20. Judah shall dwell for ever*, (when Egypt and Edom are made a desolation) and Jerusalem shall continue from *generation to generation*. This is a promise, and a precious

promise it is, (1.) That the church of Christ shall continue in the world to the end of time. As one generation of professing Christians passeth away another shall come in whom the throne of Christ shall endure for ever, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (2.) That all the living members of that church (Judah and Jerusalem are put for the inhabitants of that city and country. *Mat. iii. 5.*) shall be established in their happiness to the utmost ages of eternity. This New Jerusalem shall be from *generation to generation*, for it is a city that has foundations, not made with hands but eternal in the heavens.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JOEL.

AN

# EXPOSITION,

WITH

## PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

# A M O S.

Though this prophet appeared a little before Isaiah, yet he was not, as some have mistaken, that Amos, that was the father of Isaiah, (*Isa. i. 1.*) for in the Hebrew their names are very different; and their families too of a different character; for Isaiah was a courtier, Amos a country farmer. Amos signifies *a burden*, whence the Jews have a tradition, that he was of a slow tongue, and spoke with stammering lips, we may rather in allusion to his name say, that his speech was *weighty*, and his word the *burden of the Lord*. He was (as most think) of Judah, yet prophesied chiefly against Israel, and at Bethel, *chap. vii. 13.* Some think his style favours of his extraction, and is more plain and rustic than that of some other of the prophets; I do not see it so, but it is plain his matter agreed with that of his cotemporary Hosea, that out of the mouth of these two witnesses the word might be established. It appears by his contest with Amaziah the priest of Bethel, that he met with opposition in his work; but was a man of undaunted resolution in it, faithful and bold in reproving sin, and denouncing the judgments of God for it, and pressing in his exhortations to repentance and reformation. He begins with threatenings against the neighbour nations that were enemies to Israel, *chap. i. and ii.* Then calls Israel to account; and judgeth them for their idolatry, their unworthy walking under the favours God had bestowed upon them, and their incorrigibleness under his judgments, *chap. iii. and iv.* He calls them to repentance, *chap. v.* rejecting their hypocritical sacrifices, unless they did repent. He foretells the desolations that were coming upon them, notwithstanding their security, *chap. vi.* some particular judgments, *chap. vii.* particularly on Amaziah: and after other reproofs and threatenings, *chap. viii. and ix.* concludes with a promise of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom, and the happiness of God's spiritual Israel therein; just as the prophecy of Joel concluded. These prophets having opened the wound in their reproofs and threatenings, which shew *all wrong*, in the promises of Gospel grace open the remedy, which alone will *set all to rights*.

### C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have (1.) the general title of this prophecy, *ver. 1.* with the general scope of it, *ver. 2.* (1.) God's particular controversy with Syria, *ver. 3—5.* with Palestine, *ver. 6, 8.* with Tyre, *ver. 9, 10.* with Edom, *ver. 11, 12.* and with Ammon, *ver. 13—15.* for their cruelty to his people, and the many injuries they had done them. This explains God's pleading with the nations. Joel *iii. 2.*

1. THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. 2. And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

Here is, 1. The general character of this prophecy. It is the words which the prophet saw. Are words to be seen? Yes. God's words are; the apostles speak of the word of life, which they had not only heard, but which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and which their hands had handled, 1 John *i. 1.* such a real substantial thing is the word of God. The prophet saw these words, *i. e.* (1.) They were revealed to him in a vision, as John is said to see the voice that spake to him, *Rev. i. 12.* (2.) That which was foretold by them, was to him as certain as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. It intimates how strong he was in that faith which is the evidence of things not seen.

2. The person by whom this prophecy was sent, Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa; and was one of them. Some think he was a rich dealer in cattle; the word is used concerning the king of Moab, 2 Kings *iii. 4.* He was a sheep-master; it is likely he got money by that business, and yet he must quit it to follow God as a prophet: Others think he was a poor keeper of cattle, for we find, *chap. vii. 14, 15.* that he was withal a gatherer of wild figs, a poor employment, by which we may suppose he could but just get his bread, and that God took him, as he did David, from following the flock, and Elisha from following the plough. Many were trained up for great employments, in the quiet, innocent, contemplative business of shepherds. When God would send a prophet to reprove and warn his people, he employed a shepherd, a herdsman to do it, for they had made themselves as the horse and mule that have no understanding; nay, worse than the ox that knows his owner. God sometimes chooseth the

foolish things of the world to confound the wise. 1 Cor. *i. 27.* Note, Those whom God has endued with abilities for his service, ought not to be despised or laid aside for the meanness either of their original, or of their beginnings. Though Amos himself is not ashamed to own that he was a herdsman, yet others ought not to upbraid him with it; or think the worse of him for it.

3. The persons concerned in the prophecy of this book; it is concerning Israel, the ten tribes, who were now ripened in sin, and ripening apace for ruin. God had raised them up prophets among themselves, *chap. ii. 11.* but they regarded them not, therefore God sends them one from Tekoa, in the land of Judah, that coming from another country he might be the more valued, and perhaps he was the rather sent out of his own country, because there he was despised for his having been a herdsman. See *Matt. xiii. 55—57.*

4. The time when these prophecies were delivered. 1. The book is dated as laws used to be, by the reigns of the kings under whom the prophet prophesied. It was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, when the affairs of that kingdom went very well, and of Jeroboam the second king of Israel, when the affairs of that kingdom went pretty well, yet then they must both be told both of the sins they were guilty of and the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins, that they might not with the present gleam of prosperity flatter themselves either into an opinion of their innocency, or a confidence of their perpetual security.

2. It is dated by a particular event to which his prophecy had a reference, it was two years before the earthquake; that earthquake which is mentioned to have been in the days of Uzziah, *Zech. xiv. 5.* which put the nation into a dreadful fright, for it is there said they fled before it. But how could they flee from it? Some conjecture that this earthquake was at the time of Isaiah's vision, when the posts of the door were moved, *Isa. vi. 4.* The traditions of the Jews is, that it happened just at the time when Uzziah presumptuously invaded the priest's office, and went in to burn incense, 2 Chron. *xxvi. 16.* Josephus mentions this earthquake, *Antiq. IX. 11.* and saith, "That by it half of a mountain was removed and carried to a plain four furlongs off; and that it spoiled the king's gardens." God by this prophet gave warning of it two years before, that God by it would shake down their houses, *chap. iii. 15.*

5. The introduction to these prophecies, containing the general scope of them. *ver. 2.* The Lord will roar from Zion. His threatenings by his prophets, and the executions of those threatenings in his providences, will be as terrible as the roaring of a lion is to the shepherds and their flocks. Amos here speaks the same language with his cotemporaries, Hosea, *chap. xi. 10.* and Joel, *chap. iii. 16.* The lion roars before he tears; God gives warning before he strikes. Observe, (1.) Whence this warning comes; from Zion and Jerusalem, from the oracles of God there delivered, for by them is thy servant warned, *Psal. xix. 11.* Our God whose special residence



dence is there, will issue out warrants, *given at that court*, as it were, for the executing of judgments on the land. See *Jer. xxv. 30.* In Zion was the *mercy-seat*, thence the Lord roars, intimating that God's acts of justice are consistent with mercy, allayed and mitigated by mercy, nay, as they are warnings, they are really acts of mercy: We are chastened that we may not be condemned. (2.) What effect the warning hath, *The habitations of the shepherds mourn*, either because they fear the roaring lion; or, because they feel what is signified by that comparison, the consequences of a great drought, chap. iv. 7. which made the top of Carmel of the most fruitful fields, to wither, and become as a desert, *Joel i. 12—17.*

3. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they have threshed Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron: 4. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad. 5. I will break also the bar of Damascus and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD. 6. ¶ Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom. 7. But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: 8. And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD. 9. ¶ Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant. 10. But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof. 11. ¶ Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever. 12. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bosrah. 13. ¶ Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead that they might enlarge their border: 14. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind. 15. And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

What the Lord saith here, may be explained by what he saith, *Jer. xii. 14.* Thus saith the Lord, against all my evil neighbours that touch the inheritance of my people Israel, Behold I will pluck them out. Damascus was a near neighbour to Israel on the north, Tyre, and Gaza on the west, Edom on the south, Ammon, and (in the next chapter) Moab on the east, and all of them had been one time, one way or other, pricking briars, and grieving thorns to Israel, ill neighbours to them; and because God espouseth his people's cause, he there calls them his evil neighbours, and here comes forth to reckon with them. The method taken in dealing with each of them is in part the same, and therefore we put them together, and yet in each there is something peculiar.

1. Let us see what is repeated, both by way of charge and by way of sentence concerning them all. The controversy God has with each of them is prefaced with, *Thus saith the Lord*, Jehovah the God of Israel: Though those nations will not worship him as their God, yet they shall be made to know that they are accountable to him as their judge. The God of Israel is the God of the whole earth, and hath something to say to them, that shall make them tremble. Against them the Lord roars out of Zion. And before God, by the prophet, threatens Israel and Judah, he denounceth judgments against these nations whom he made use of as scourges to them for their being so; which might serve for a check to their pride and insolence, and a relief to his people under their dejections; for hereby they might see that God had not quitted his interest in them, and therefore might hope they had not lost their interest in him.

Now as to all these nations here arraigned,

1. The indictment drawn up against them all is thus far the same, (1.) That they are charged in general with three transgressions and with four, i. e. with many transgressions; as by one or two we mean a few, so by three or four we mean many, as in Latin, a man that is very happy is said to be *terque quaterque beatus*; or with three and four, i. e. with seven transgressions, a number of perfection; intimating that they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and are ripe for ruin. Or, with three, i. e. a variety of sins, and with a fourth especially, which is specified concerning each of them, though the other three are not. As *Prov. xxx. 15—18—21—29.* where we read of three things, *yea four*, generally one seems to be more especially intended. (2.) That the particular sin which is fastened upon as the fourth, and which alone is instanced in, is the of persecution; it is some mischief or other done to the people of God, that is particularly charged upon every one of them; for the perfection is the measure-filling sin of any people; and it is this sin that will be particularly reckoned for: *I was hungry, and you gave me no meat*, much more if it may be said, *I was hungry, and you took my meat from me.*

2. The judgment given against them all is thus far the same. (1.) That their sin being come to such a height, God will not turn away the punishment thereof. i. e. Though he has granted them a long reprieve, and has often turned away their punishment, yet now he will turn it away no longer, but justice shall take its course, *I will not revoke it*, so some read it, i. e.

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not recall the voice, which is gone forth from Zion and Jerusalem, *ver. 2.* speaking death and terror to the sinful nations: It is an irrevocable sentence; God hath spoken it, and he will not call it back. Note, Though God bear long he will not bear always with those that provoke him; and when the decree brings forth, it will bring up. (2.) That God will kindle a fire among them; this is said concerning all these ill neighbours, *ver. 4—7—10—12—14.* God will send a fire into their cities: When fires are kindled that lay cities, towns, and houses in ashes, whether designedly or casually, God must be acknowledged in it: They are of his sending; his fires up the fire of his jealousy, and that kindles other fires.

2. Let us see what is mentioned both by way of charge, and by way of sentence, that is peculiar to each of them; that every one may take his portion.

1. Concerning Damascus the head city of Syria, a kingdom that was often vexations to Israel. (1.) The peculiar sin of Damascus was using the Gileadites barbarously; they threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron, *ver. 3.* which may be understood either literally, of their putting the inhabitants of Gilead to the torture or to cruel deaths, whom they got into their hands; as David put the Ammonites under *saws and harrows*, *2 Sam. xii. 31.* we read with what inhumanity Hazael king of Syria prosecuted his wars with Israel; *2 Kings viii. 12.* he dashed their children, and ripped up their women with child; and see what desolations he made in their land, *2 Kings x. 32, 33.* it may be taken figuratively, for his laying the country waste, and this very similitude is used in the history of it, *2 Kings xiii. 7.* he destroyed them, and made them like the dust by threshing. Note, Men often do that unjustly and wickedly, and shall be severely reckoned with for it, which yet God justly permits them to do. The church is called *God's threshing*, and the chaff of their floor, they shall be sure to hear of it. (2.) The peculiar punishment of Damascus is, (1.) That the fire which shall be sent shall fasten upon the court in the first place, not on the chief city, or the country towns, but on the house of Hazael, which he built, and it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad, i. e. the royal palaces inhabited by the kings of Syria, many of whom were of that name. Note, Even royal palaces are no fence against the judgments of God, though never so richly furnished, though never so strongly fortified. (2.) That the enemy shall force his way into the city; *ver. 5.* I will break the bar of Damascus; and then the gate lies open: Or, it may be understood figuratively; all that which is depended upon as the strength and safety of that great city shall fail and prove insufficient. When God's judgments come with commission it is in vain to think of turning them out. (3.) That the people shall be destroyed with the sword; *I will cut off the inhabitants from the plain of Aven, the valley of idolatry*, for the gods of the Syrians were gods of the valleys, *1 Kings xx. 23.* were worshipped in valleys; as the idols of Israel were worshipped on the hills: him also that holdeth the sceptre of power, some petty king or other that used to boast of the sceptre he held from Beth-Eden, the house of pleasure. Both those that were given to idolatry, and those that were given to sensuality, shall be cut off together. (4.) That the body of the nation shall be carried off. The people shall go into captivity unto Kir; which was in the country of the Medes: We find this fulfilled, *2 Kings xvi. 9.* about fifty years after this, when the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin at the instigation of Ahaz king of Judah.

2. Concerning Gaza, a city of the Philistines, and now the metropolis of that country: (1.) The peculiar sin of the Philistines was carrying away captive the whole captivity, either of Israel or Judah, which some think refers to that inroad made upon Jehoram, when they took away all the king's sons, and all his substance, *2 Chron. xxi. 17.* Or perhaps to their seizing those that fled to them for shelter, when Sennacherib invaded Judah, and selling them to the Grecians, *Joel iii. 4—6.* or (as here) to the Edomites who were always sworn enemies to the people of God. They spared none, but carried off all they could lay their hands on, designing if possible to cut off the name of Israel, *Psal. lxxxiii. 4—7.* (2.) The peculiar punishment of the Philistines is, that the fire which God will send shall devour the palaces of Gaza, and that the inhabitants of the other cities of the Philistines Ashdod (or Azotus) Ashkelon, and Ekron should all be cut off, and God would make as thorough work with them in their ruin, as they would have made with God's people when they carried away the whole captivity, for even the remnant of them shall perish, *ver. 8.* Note, God will make a full end of those that think to make a full end of his church and people.

3. Concerning Tyre, that famous city of wealth and strength, that was itself a kingdom, *ver. 9.* (1.) The peculiar sin of Tyre, is delivering up the whole captivity to Edom, i. e. selling to the Edomites those of Israel that fled to them for shelter, or any way fell into their hands; not caring what hardships they put upon them, for they could but make gain of them to themselves. Herein they forget the brotherly covenant, the league that was between Solomon and Hiram king of Tyre, *1 Kings v. 12.* which was so intimate, that Hiram called Solomon his brother, *2 Kings ix. 13.* Note, It is a great aggravation of enmity and malice, when it is the violation of friendship and of a brotherly covenant. (2.) Here is nothing peculiar in the punishment of Tyrus, but that the palaces thereof shall be devoured, which was done when Nebuchadnezzar took it after thirteen years siege. Their merchants were all princes, and their private houses were as palaces; but the fire shall make no more of them than cottages.

4. Concerning Edom the posterity of Esau. (1.) Their peculiar sin was an unmerciful, unwearied pursuit of the people of God, and their taking all advantages against them to do them a mischief, *ver. 11.* He did pursue his brother with the sword, not only of old, when the king of Edom took up arms to oppose the children of Israel's passage through his border, *Numb. xx. 18.* but ever since upon all occasions: they had not strength and courage enough to face them in the field of battle; but whenever any other enemy had put Judah or Israel to flight, then the Edomites set in with the pursuers, fell upon the rear, slew those that were half dead already, and (as is usual with cowards when they have an enemy at an advantage) they did cast off all pity. Those that are least courageous are commonly most cruel; Edom was so; his malice destroyed his compassion, so the word is; he stripped himself of the tenderness of a man, and put on the fierceness of a beast of prey; and as such a one he did tear, his anger did tear perpetually. His cruelty was insatiable, and he never knew when he had sucked enough of the blood of Israel, but like the horse-leech still cried, *Give, give.* Nay; he kept his wrath for ever; when he wanted objects of his wrath, and opportunity to shew it, yet he kept it in reserve; it rested in his bosom, rolled it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, and had it ready to spit in the face of Israel upon the next occasion. Cursed be such cruel wrath, and anger so fierce, so outrageous, which makes men like the devil, who continually seeks to devour, and unlike to God, who keepeth not his anger for ever. Edom's malice was unnatural, for thus he cursed his brother, whom he ought to have protected: it was hereditary, if it had been entailed upon the family ever since Esau hated Jacob, and time itself could not wear it out, no nor the brotherly carriage of Israel towards them, *Deut. ii. 4.* and the express law given to Israel, *Deut. xxiii. 7.* Thou shalt



not *abhor* a Edomite, for he is thy brother. (2.) Here is nothing peculiar in their punishment; but, ver. 12, a fire shall be sent to devour their palaces. Note, The fire of our anger against our brethren kindles the fire of God's anger against us.

5. Concerning the Ammonites, ver. 13, 14, 15. (1.) See how violently the fire of their anger turned against the people of God; they not only triumphed in their calamities, as we find, *Ezek. xvi. 2-6*, but they did themselves use them barbarously, they *ripped up the women with child of Gilead* a piece of cruelty, the very mention whereof strikes a horror upon one's mind: one would think it not possible that any of the human race should be so inhuman. Hazael was guilty of it, *2 Kings viii. 12*. It was done not only in a brutish rage, which falls without consideration upon all that comes before it, but with a devilish design to extirpate the race of Israel, by killing not only all that were born but all that were to be born, worse than Egyptian cruelty. It was that they might enlarge their border, that they might make the land of Gilead their own, and there might be none to lay claim to it, or give them any disturbance in the possession of it. We find, *Jer. xlii. 1*, that the Ammonites inherited Gad, i. e. Gilead, under pretence that Israel had no sons, no heirs. We know how heavy their doom was, and how heinous their crime, who said, *This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and he inheritance shall be ours by occupancy*. See what cruelty covetousness is the cause of; and what horrid practices those are often put upon that are greedy to enlarge their own border. (2.) See how violently the fire of God's anger burned against them: shall not God visit for these things done to any of mankind, especially when they are done to his own people? shall not his fire be kindled against a nation as this? No doubt it shall. The fire shall be kindled with shouting on the day of battle, i. e. war shall kindle the fire, it shall be a fire accompanied with the sword, or a roaring fire, which shall make a noise like that of soldiers ready to engage. And it shall be as a tempest in the day of the whirlwind, which comes swiftly, furiously and bears down all before it. Or this tempest and whirlwind shall be as bellows to the fire, to make it burn the stronger and spread the further. It is particularly threatened that their king and his princes shall go together into captivity, carried away by the king of Babylon, not long after Judah was. See what changes God's providence often makes with men, or rather their own sin; kings become captives, and princes prisoners. *Milchom shall go into captivity*; some understand it of the god of the Ammonites, whom they called Moloch a king; he and his princes, and his priests that attended him, shall go into captivity: their idol shall be so far from protecting them, that it shall itself go into captivity with them. Note, Those who by violence and fraud seek to enlarge their own border, will justly be expelled and excluded their own border; nor is it strange if those who make no conscience of invading others rights, be able to make no resistance against those that invade theirs.

## CHAP. II.

In this Chapter (1.) God, by the prophet, proceeds in a like controversy with Moab, as before with other nations, ver. 1-3. (2.) He shows what quarrel he had with Judah, ver. 4, 5. (3.) He at length begins his charge against Israel, to which all that goes before is but an introduction. Observe, (1.) The sins they are charged with, injustice, oppression, whoredom, ver. 6-8. (2.) The aggravations of those sins; the temporal and spiritual mercies God had bestowed upon them, for which they had made him such ungrateful returns, ver. 9-12. (3.) God's complaint of them for their sins, ver. 13, and his threatenings of their ruin, and their utter inability to prevent it, ver. 14-16.

1. **THUS** saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime: 2. But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet: 3. And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD. 4. ¶ Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked: 5. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem. 6. ¶ Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; 7. That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek; and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name: 8. And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God.

Here is, 1. The judgment of Moab, another of the nations that bordered upon Israel. They are reckoned with, and shall be punished for three transgressions and for four, as those before. Now, (1.) Moab's fourth transgression, as those who were before set to the bar, was *cruelty*; the influence given refers not to the people of God, but to a heathen like themselves: The king of Moab burnt the bones of the king of Edom into lime. We find there was war between the Edomites and the Moabites, in which the king of Moab in distress and rage offered his own son for a burnt-offering to appease his deity, *2 Kings iii. 26, 27*. And it should seem that afterwards he or some of his successors in revenge upon the Edomites for bringing him to that extremity, having an advantage against the king of Edom, either seized him alive and burnt him to ashes, or slew him and burnt his body, or digged up the bones of their dead king, of that particularly who had so straitened him, and, in token of his rage and fury, burnt them to lime, and perhaps made use of the powder of his bones for the white-washing of the walls and ceiling of his palace, that he might please himself with the sight of that monument of his revenge. *Ergo vincit ut bonum vita periculis ipsa*. It is barbarous to abuse human bodies, for we ourselves also are in the body; it is con-

ests to abuse dead bodies, nay, it is impious, for we believe, and look for their resurrection. And to abuse the dead bodies of kings (whose persons and names ought to be in a particular manner respected and had in veneration) is an affront to majesty; it is an argument of a base spirit for those to trample upon a dead lion, who were he alive would tumble before him. (2.) Moab's doom for this transgression is, (1.) A judgment of death: those that deal cruelly shall be cruelly dealt with, ver. 2. Moab shall die, the Moabites shall be cut off with the sword of war, which kills with tumult, with shouting and with sound of trumpet, circumstances that make it so much the more terrible; as the lion's roaring aggravates his tearing, every battle of the warrior is with confusion, *1 Sam. xv. 5*. (2.) It is a judgment upon their judge who had passed the sentence upon the bones of the king of Edom that they should be burnt to lime, I will cut him off, saith God, ver. 3. he shall know there is a judge that is higher than he. The king, the chief judge, and all the inferior judges and princes shall be cut off together. If the people sometimes suffer for the sins of their princes, yet the princes themselves shall not escape, *Jer. xlviii. 47*. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

2. Judah also is a near neighbour to Israel; and therefore now justice is riding the circuit, that shall not be passed by; that nation had made itself like the heathen, and mingled itself with them, and therefore the indictment here runs against them in the same form in which it had run against all the rest; for three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; their sins are as many as the sins of other nations, and we find them huddled up with them in the same character, *Jer. ix. 26*. Egypt and Judah and Edom, jumble them together, they are all alike: the sentence here also is the same, ver. 5. I will send a fire upon Judah, though it is the land where God is known, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, when time was, *Psal. xlviii. 3*. But the sin here charged upon Judah is different from all the rest. The other nations were reckoned with for injuries done to men, but Judah is reckoned with for indignities done to God, ver. 4. (1.) They put contempt upon his statutes, and persisted in disobedience to them; they have despised the law of the Lord, as if it were not worth taking notice of, nor had any thing in it valuable: and herein they despised the wisdom, justice, and goodness, as well as the authority and sovereignty of the law maker; this they did in effect when they kept not his commandments, made no conscience of them, took no care about them. (2.) They put honour upon his rivals, their idols, here called their lies, which caused them to err; for an image is a teacher of lies, *Isa. ii. 18*. And they that are led away into the error of idolatry, are by that led into a multitude of other errors. *Uno dato absurdum mille sequuntur*. God is an infinite eternal spirit; but when that truth of God is by idolatry changed into a lie, all his other truths are in danger of being so changed likewise; thus their idols caused them to err, and God justly gave them up to strong delusions; nor was it any excuse for their sin, that they were the less after which their father walked, for they should rather have taken warning, than taken pattern by those that perished with these lies in their right hand.

3. We now at length come to the words which Amos saw concerning Israel; the reproofs and threatenings having walked the round, here they center, here they settle. He begins with them as with the rest, For three transgressions of Israel, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof, if all these nations must be punished for their iniquities, shall Israel go unpunished; Observe here what their sins were for which God would reckon with them.

1. *Perverting justice*. This was the sin of those who were intrusted with the administration of justice, the judges and magistrates, and all parties concerned; they made nothing of selling a righteous man and his righteous cause when it came to be tried before them; for a piece of silver sentence was passed, not according to the merits of the cause, but the bribe always turned the scale, and judgment was set to sale by auction to the highest bidder. They would sell the life and livelihood of a poor man for a pair of shoes, for the least advantage to themselves that could be proposed to them; give them but a pair of shoes, and the cause of a poor man, who could not give them so much as that, should be betrayed, and left at the mercy of those that will have no mercy; they will rather play at small game than sit out; for a piece of bread such a man will transgress. Note, Those that will wrong their consciences for any thing, will come at length to do it for next to nothing; that begin to sell justice for silver, will, in time, be so fond as to sell it for a pair of shoes, for a pair of old shoes.

2. *Oppressing the poor*, and seeking to benefit themselves by doing them a mischief; They pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor; they swallow up the poor with the utmost greediness, and make a prey of them that are in sorrow, dust on their heads; poor orphans that are in mourning for their parents, they catch at them to get their estates into their hands; they never rest till they have got the heads of the poor in the dust, to be trodden on. Or they pant after the dust of the earth, i. e. silver and gold, white and yellow dust, they covet it earnestly, and levy it upon the head of the poor, by their unjust exactions. Note, Men's seeking to enrich themselves by the impoverishing of others, is a transgression which God will not long turn away the punishment of. This is turning aside the way of the meek, contriving to do injury to those that they know are mild and patient, and will bear injury. They invade their rights, break their measures, and obstruct the course of justice in favour of them, not suffering them to go on with the righteous cause; this is turning aside their way. Note, The more patiently men bear the injuries that are done them, the greater is the sin of those that injure them, and the more occasion they have to expect that God will right them, and take vengeance for them; I as a deaf man, heard not, and then thou wilt hear.

3. *Abominable uncleanness*, even incest itself, such as is not named among the Gentiles, that a man should have his father's wife, *1 Cor. v. 1*, his father's concubine, a man and his father will go in unto the same young woman, as black an influence any other of an unbounded promiscuous lust; and yet where the former iniquities of oppression and extortion are, this also is found; for laws of modesty seldom hold those that have broke the bands of justice, and cast away its cords from them. This wickedness is such a scandal to religion, and the pollution of it, that they who are guilty of it are looked upon as designing thereby to profane God's holy name, and to render it odious among the heathen, as if he countenanced the villainies which those who pretend relation to him allow themselves in, and were altogether such a one as they.

4. *Regulating themselves, and yet pretending to honour their God* with that which they had got by oppression and extortion, ver. 8. They add idolatry to their injustice, and then think to atone for their injustice with their idolatry. (1.) They make merry with that which they have unjustly squeezed from the poor. They lay themselves down at ease, and in state, and stretch themselves upon clothes laid to pledge, which they ought to have restored the same night according to the law, *Lev. xxiv. 12, 13*. And they drink the wine of the condemned, of such as they have fined and laid heavy mulcts upon, spending that in festivity which they have got by injustice. (2.) They think to make atonement for this, by feasting on the gains of oppression before



before their altars, and drinking this wine in the house of their god, in the temples where they worshipped their calves, as if they would make God a partner in their crimes, by making him a partner of the profits of them: service good enough for false gods; but the true God will not thus be mocked: he has declared he hates robbery for burnt offerings, and cannot be served acceptably but with that which is got honestly.

9. ¶ Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath. 10. Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. 11. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD. 12. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets saying, Prophecy not. 13. Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves. 14. Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself: 15. Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself; neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself. 16. And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

Here, 1. God puts his people Israel in mind of the great things he had done for them in putting them into possession of the land of Canaan, the greatest part of which these ten tribes now enjoyed, ver. 9, 10. Note, We need often to be minded of the mercies we have received, which are the heaviest aggravations of the sins we have committed. God gives liberally and upbraids us not with our meanness and unworthiness, and the disproportion between his gifts and our merits; but he justly upbraids us with our ingratitude and ill requital of his favours, and tells us what he has done for us, to shame us for not rendering again according to the benefit done to us. *Son, remember, Israel, remember,* (1.) That God brought thee out of a house of bondage, rescued thee out of the land of Egypt, where else thou hadst perished in slavery. (2.) That he led thee forty years through a desert land, and fed thee in a wilderness, where else thou hadst perished with hunger. Mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us; for if they had been cut off we had not been. (3.) That he made room for them in Canaan, by extirpating the natives, by a series of wonders, little inferior to those by which they were redeemed out of Egypt: *I destroyed the Amorite before them*, here put for all devoted nations: Observe the magnificence of the enemies that stood in their way, which is taken notice of that God may be the more magnified in the subduing of them; they were of great stature, his height was like the height of the cedars, and the people of Israel were as shrubs to them: And of great strength, not only tall but well-set; he was strong as the oaks; their kingdom was eminent among the nations, and overtopped all its neighbours, the supports and defences of it seemed impregnable, it was as fine as the stately cedar, it was as firm as the sturdy oak, yet when God had a vine to plant there, (Psal. lxxx, 8, 9.) this Amorite is not only cut down, but plucked up; *I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath*, so that the Amorites were no more a nation, nor ever read of any more: Thus highly did God value Israel, he gave men for them and people for their life, Isa. xliii. 4. How ungrateful then were they, who put such contempt upon him! (4.) That he made them possess the land of the Amorite, not only put it into their hands, so that they became masters of it, *jure belli*, but gave them a better title to it, so that it became their's by promise.

2. He likewise upbraids them with the spiritual privileges and advantages they enjoyed as a holy nation, ver. 11. They had helps for their souls, which taught them how to make a good use of their temporal enjoyments, and were therefore more valuable. It is true the ten tribes had not God's temple, altar, and priesthood, and it was their own fault that they deserted them, and for that they might justly have been left in utter darkness; but, God left not himself without witness, or them without guides, to shew them the way: (1.) They had prophets that were powerful instructors in piety, divinely inspired, and commissioned to make known the mind of God to them, to shew them what is pleasing to God, and what displeasing; to reprove them for their faults, and warn them of their danger; to direct them in their difficulties, and comfort them in their troubles. God raised them up prophets, spirited them for that work, and employed them in it. He raised them up of their sons, from among themselves, as Moses and Christ were raised up from among their brethren, Deut. xviii. 15. It was an honour put upon their nation, and upon their families that they had children of their own to be God's messengers to them, of their own language, not strangers sent from another country, whom they might suspect to be prejudiced against them and their land, but those whom they knew wished well to them. Note, Faithful ministers are great blessings to any people, and it is God that raiseth them up to be so, and they may justly be reckoned an honour to the families they are of. (2.) They had Nazarites that were bright examples of piety; *I raised up of your young men for Nazarites*, men that bound themselves by a vow to God and his service, and in pursuance of that denied themselves many of the lawful delights of sense, as drinking wine, and eating grapes: There were some of their young men that were in their prime for the enjoyment of the pleasures of this life, and yet voluntarily abridged themselves of them; These God raised up by the power of his grace, to be monuments of his grace, to his glory, and to be his witnesses against the impieties of that degenerate age. Note, It is as great a blessing to any place to have eminent good Christians in it, as to have eminent good ministers in it; for so they have examples to their rules. We must acknowledge, that it bodes well to any people when God raiseth up numbers of hopeful young people among them; when he makes their young men Nazarites, devout and conscientious, and mortified to the pleasures of sense, and those that are such Nazarites are purer than snow, whiter than milk, they are indeed the polite young men, for their polishing is of supphires, Jam. iv. 7. They that have such men, such young men among them have therein such an advantage both for direction and encouragement to be religious, as they will be called to an account for another day if they do not improve. Israel is here reckoned with, not only for the prophets, but for the Nazarites raised up among them. Concerning the truth of this he appeals to themselves, *Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel?* Can you deny it? Have not you yourselves been sensible of the advantage you had by the prophets and Nazarites raised up among you? Note, Sinners own con-

sciences will be witnesses for God, that he has not been wanting to them in the means of grace, so that if they perish it is because they have been wanting themselves in not improving those means. The men of Judah shall themselves judge between God and his vineyard, whether he could have done more for it, Isa. v. 3, 4.

3. He chargeth them with the abuse of the means of grace they enjoyed, and the opposition they gave to God's designs in affording them those means, ver. 12. They were so far from walking in the light, that they rebelled against it, and did what they could to extinguish it, that it might not shine in their faces to their conviction. (1.) They did what they could to debase good people, to draw them off from their seriousness in devotion, and their strictness in conversation, *ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink*, contrary to their vow, that having broken it in that instance they might not pretend to keep it in any other. Some they surprised or allured into it, and with their much fair speech caused them to yield; others they forced and frightened into it, reproached and threatened them, if they were more precise than their neighbours; and by drawing them in to drink wine they spoiled them for Nazarites. Note, Satan and his agents are very busy to corrupt the minds of young people that look heaven-ward, and many that we thought would have been Nazarites, they have overcome by giving them wine to drink; by drawing them into the love of mirth and pleasure, and drinking company; multitudes of young men that bid fair for eminent professors of religion have erred through wine, and been undone for ever. And how do the factors for hell triumph in the debauching of a Nazarite! (2.) They did what they could to silence good ministers, and to stop their mouths; *ye commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not*, and threatened them if they did prophecy, chap. vii. 12. as if God's messengers were bound to observe your orders, and might not deliver their errand unless you gave them leave, and so you not only received the grace of God in raising up those prophets in vain, but put the highest affront imaginable upon that God in whose name the prophet spoke. Note, Those have a great deal to answer for that cannot bear faithful preaching, and those much more that suppress it.

4. He complains of the wrong they did him by their sins, ver. 13. *I am pressed under you*, I am straitened by you, and know not what to do, Hos. xi. 8, 9. I am loaded and burdened by you, and can no longer bear it, and therefore *I will ease me of my adversaries*, Isa. i. 24. *I am pressed under you*, and the load of your sins, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, is loaded with corn, in the midst of the joy of harvest, as long as any will let on. Note, The great God complains of sin, especially the sins of his professing people as a burthen to him. He is grieved with this generation, Psal. xcv. 10. *is broken with their whorish heart*, Ezek. vi. 9. A consideration which if it make not the sinner's repentance very deep, it will make his ruin very great. The great God that upholds the world, and never complains that he is pressed under the weight of it, he fainteth not, neither is weary, yet complains of the sins of Israel, yea, and of their hypocritical services too, that he is weary of bearing them, Isa. i. 14. No wonder the creature groans being burdened, Rom. viii. 22. when the Creator saith, *I am pressed under them*.

5. He threatens them with unavoidable ruin. And so some read, ver. 13. *Behold I will press, or straiten your place, as a cart full of sheaves presseth*; they shall be loaded with judgments till they shall sink under them, and shall make a noise, as a cart overloaded doth. They that will not submit to the convictions of the word, that will neither be won by that, nor by the conversation of those about them, shall be made to sink under the weight of God's judgments. If God load us daily with his benefits, and we notwithstanding that load him with our sins, how can we expect any other but that he should load us with his judgments? And it is here threatened in the three last verses, that when God comes forth to contend with this provoking people, they shall not be able to stand before him, to flee from him, or to make their part good with him; for when God judgeth he will overcome. Though his patience be tired out, his power is not, and so the sinner shall find to his cost. When the Assyrian army comes to lay the country waste by sword and captivity, none shall escape, but every one shall have his share in the common desolation. (1.) It will be in vain to think of fleeing from the enemy that comes armed with a commission to make all desolate. *The flight shall perish from the swift*; those that have been famed for happy escapes and happy retreats, their arts shall now fail them; they shall have no time to flee, or shall find no way to take; or they shall have no strength or spirit to attempt it. They shall be at their wit's end, and then they are soon at their flight's end. Are they as Achish, as swift of foot as a wild roe? 2 Sam. ii. 18. yet like him they shall run the faster upon their own destruction; *he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself*, ver. 5. Or do they say, as those, Isa. xxx. 16. *We will flee upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift*, yet they shall be overtaken, *neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself from the pursuers: A horse is a vain thing for safety*. (2.) It will be in vain to think of fighting it out. God is at war with them, and are they stronger than he? Is there any military force that can pretend to be a match for omnipotence? No, the strong shall not strengthen his force. He that has a habit to strength, shall not be able to exert it when he has occasion for it. And the mighty who should protect and deliver others, shall not be able to deliver himself, to deliver his soul, so the word is, shall not save his life; let not the strong man then glory in his strength, nor trust in it, but strengthen himself in the Lord his God, for in him is everlasting strength. And as the bodily strength shall fail, so shall the weapons of war, the armour as well as the arm shall become insufficient; *neither shall he stand that handles the bow*, though he stand at a distance, but shall betake himself to flight, and not trust to his own bow to save him; though the arm were never so strong, and the armour never so well fixed, neither will avail when the spirit fails, ver. 16. *He that is courageous among the mighty*, that used to look danger in the face and not be dismayed at it, he shall flee away naked in that day; not only disarmed, having thrown away his weapons both offensive and defensive, but plundered of his treasure, which he thought to have carried away with him: and he shall think it as much as bargain that he has his life for a prey. Thus when God pleaseth, he taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them who used to boast of their courage, and their daring enterprises in the field, to wander and sneak in a wilderness where there is no way, Job xii. 24.

## CHAP. III.

A stupid, senseless, heedless people, are in this chapter called upon to take notice, (1.) Of the judgments of God denounced against them, and the warnings he gave them of those judgments; and to be hereby awakened out of their security, ver. 1-8. (2.) Of the sins that were found among them, by which God was provoked thus to threaten, thus to punish, that they might justify God in his controversy with them, and unless they repented and reformed, might expect no other but that God should proceed in his controversy, ver. 9-15.



1. **H**EAR this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, 2. You only have I known of all the families of the earth : therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. 3. Can two walk together, except they be agreed ? 4. Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey ? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing ? 5. Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him ? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all ? 6. Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid ? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it ? 7. Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the Prophets. 8. The lion hath roared, who will not fear ? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophecy ?

The scope of these verses is to convince the people of Israel that God had a controversy with them ; that which the prophet has to say to them, is to let them know that the Lord hath something to say against them, ver. 1. They were his peculiar people above others, knew his name, and were called by it, nevertheless he hath something against them, and they are called to hear what it is, that they may consider what answer they shall make ; as the prisoner at the bar is bid to *hearken to his indictment*. The children of Israel would not regard the words of counsel and comfort that God had many a time spoken to them, and now they shall be made to hear the word of reproof and threatening that the Lord hath spoken against them ; for He will act as He hath spoken.

1. Let them know that the gracious cognizance God had taken of them, and the favours he had bestowed upon them, should not exempt them from the punishment due to them for their sins. It is a family that God brought up out of the land of Egypt, ver. 1. and it was no more but a family when it went down thither ; thence God delivered it, thence he fetched it to be a family to himself. It is not only the *ten tribes*, the kingdom of Israel that must take notice of this, but that of Judah also, for it is spoken against the whole family that God brought up out of Egypt : It is a family that God has bestowed distinguishing favours upon, has owned in a particular manner ; You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Note, God's church in the world is a family dignified above all the families of the earth : those that know God are known of him ; in Judah is God known, and therefore Judah is more than any people known of God. God has known them, i. e. he has chosen them, covenanted with them, and conversed with them as his acquaintance.

Now one would think it should follow, therefore I will spare you, will connive at your faults, and excuse you : No, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Note, The distinguishing favours of God to us, if they do not serve to restrain us from sin, shall not serve to exempt us from punishment : nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, and the kinder notice he has taken of them, the more surely, the more quickly, and the more severely will he reckon with them, if they by a course of wilful sin profane their character, disgrace their relation to him, violate their engagements, and put a slight upon the favours and honours with which they have been distinguished. Therefore they shall be punished, because their sins dishonour him, affront him, and grieve him more than the sins of others, and because it is necessary that God should vindicate his own honour, by making it appear that he hates sin, and hates it most in those that are nearest to him ; if they be but as bad as others, they shall be punished as worse than others, because it is justly expected they should be so much better than others : judgment begins at the house of God, begins at the sanctuary, for God will be sanctified either by or upon those that come nigh unto him, Lev. x. 3.

2. Let them know, that they could not expect any comfortable communion with God, unless they first made their peace with him, ver. 3. Can two walk together except they be agreed ? No, how should they ? Where there is not friendship there can be no fellowship ; if two persons be at variance they must first accommodate the matters in difference between them, before there can be any interchanging of good offices. Israel had affronted God, had broken their covenant with him, and ill requited his favours to them, and yet they expected he should continue to walk with them, should take their part, act for them, and give them assurances of his presence with them, though they took no care by repentance and reformation to agree with their adversary, and to turn away his wrath ; but how can that be ? saith God, while you continue to walk contrary to God, you can look for no other but that he should walk contrary to you, Lev. xxvi. 23. Note, We cannot expect that God should be present with us, or act for us, unless we be reconciled to him. God and man cannot walk together, except they be agreed ; unless we agree with God in our end, which is his glory, we cannot walk with him by the way.

3. Let them know, that the warnings God gave them of judgments approaching were not cautions and groundlets, merely to amuse them, but certain declarations of the wrath of God against them, which (if they did not speedily repent) they would infallibly feel the effects of, ver. 4. Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey in view ? No, he roars upon his prey ; nor will a young lion cry out of his den, if the old lion have taken nothing to bring home to him ; nor would God thus give you warning both by the threatenings of his word, and by lesser judgments, if you had not by your sins made yourselves a prey to his wrath, nor if he were not really about to fall upon you with desolating, destroying judgments. Note, The threatenings of the word and providence of God are not bugbears to frighten children and fools, but are certain inferences from the sin of man, and certain prefaces of the judgments of God.

4. Let them know, that as their own wickedness was the procuring cause of these judgments, so they shall not be removed till they have done their work, ver. 5. When God is come forth to contend with a sinful people, it is necessary they should understand, (1.) That it is their own sin that has entangled them ; for can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him ? No, nature doth not lay snares for the creatures, but the art of men ; a bird is not taken in a snare by chance, but with the fowler's design ; so the providence of God prepares trouble for sinners, and it is in the work of their own hands that they are snared ; affliction doth not spring out of the dust, but it is God's justice, and our own wickedness that corrects us. (2.) It is nothing but their own repentance that can disentangle them ; for shall one take up a snare from the earth which he laid with design, except he have taken something as he designed ? so neither will God remove the afflic-

tion he hath sent, till it have done its work, and accomplished that for which he sent it. If our hearts be duly humbled, and we are brought by our afflictions to confess and forsake our sins, then the snare has taken something, then the point is gained, the end is answered, and then, and not till then, the snare is broken, is taken up from the earth, and we are delivered in love and mercy.

5. Let them know that all their troubles come from the hand of God's providence, and from the counsel of his will, ver. 6. Shall there be evil in a city, in a family, in a nation, and the Lord has not done it ? appointed it, and performed what he appointed ? The evil of sin is from ourselves, it is our own doing, but the evil of trouble, personal or public, is from God, and is his doing, whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent ; out of his mouth both evil and good proceed.

This consideration, That whatever evil is in the city, the Lord has done it, should engage us patiently to bear our share in public calamities, and to study to answer God's intention in them.

6. Let them know, that their prophets who give them warning of judgments approaching, deliver nothing to them but what they have received from the Lord, to be delivered to his people. (1.) God makes it known beforehand to the prophets, ver. 7. Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, none of that evil in the city spoken of, ver. 6. but he reveals it to his servants the prophets, though to others it is a secret. Therefore they know not what they do, who make light of the warnings which the prophets give them in God's name. Observe, God's prophets are his servants, whom he employs to go on his errands to the children of men, The secret of God is with them ; it is in some sense with all the righteous. Prov. iii. 32. with all that fear God, Psal. xxv. 11. but in a peculiar manner with the prophets, to whom the Spirit of prophecy is a Spirit of revelation.

It had put honour enough upon prophets if it had been only said, that sometimes God is pleased to reveal to his prophets what he designs to do ; but it speaks something very great to say he doth nothing ; but he reveals it to them, as if they were the men of his counsel. Shall I hide from Abraham who is a prophet, the thing which I do ? Gen. xviii. 18. God will therefore be sure to reckon with those who put contempt on the prophets whom he puts this honour upon. (2.) The prophets cannot but make that known to the people which God has made known to them, ver. 8. The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy ? his prophets to whom he hath spoken in secret by dreams and visions, cannot but speak in public to the people what they have heard from God. They are so full of those things themselves, so well assured concerning them, and so much affected with them, that they cannot but speak of them ; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. I believed, therefore, have I spoken, Acts iv. 20. Nay, and besides the prophetic impulse which went along with the inspiration, and made the word like a fire in the bones, Jer. xx. 9. they received a command from God to deliver what they had been charged with, and they had been false to their trust, if they had not done it. Necessity was laid upon them as upon the preachers of the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 16.

7. Let them know, that they ought to tremble before God, upon the fair warning he hath given them ; as they would, (1.) Upon the sounding of a trumpet, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, that all may stand upon their guard, and stand to their arms. Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid, or run together ? as some read it, ver. 6. Will they not presently come together in a fight to consider what is best to be done for the common safety ? Yet when God by his prophets gives them notice of their danger and summons them to come, and lift themselves under his banner, it makes no impression ; they will sooner give credit to a watchman on their walls than to a prophet sent of God ; will sooner obey the summons of the governor of their city, than the orders given them by the governor of the world. God saith, Hearken to the voice of the trumpet, but they will not hearken, nay, and they tell him plainly that they will not, Jer. vi. 17. (2.) Upon the roaring of a lion. God is sometimes as a lion, and a young lion to the house of Judah, Hos. iv. 11. The lion roars before he tears ; thus God warns before he wounds ; if therefore the lion roars upon a poor traveller, as he did against Samson, Judg. xiv. 5. he cannot but be put into a mighty consternation ; yet the Lord roars out of Zion, but he put into a mighty consternation ; yet the Lord roars out of Zion, chap. i. 2. and none are afraid, but they go on securely, as if they were in no danger. Note, The fair warning given to a careless world, if it be not taken will aggravate its condemnation another day. The lion roared, and they were not moved with fear to prepare an ark. O the amazing stupidity of an unbelieving world, that will not be wrought upon, no, not by the terrors of the Lord !

9. ¶ Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria : and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof. 10. For they know not to do right, saith the LORD ; who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. 11. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD. An adversary there shall be even round about the land : and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. 12. Thus saith the LORD, As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear ; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria, in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch. 13. Hear ye and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts. 14. That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. 15. And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

Israel is here again convicted and condemned, and particular notice given of the crimes they are convicted of, and the punishments they are condemned to.

1. Notice is given of it to their neighbours. The prophet is ordered to publish it in the palaces of Ashdod, one of the chief cities of the Philistines ; nay, the summons must go further, even to the palaces in the land of Egypt, the great men of both those nations, that dwell in the palaces, that are inquisitive concerning the affairs of the neighbour-nations, and are conversant with the public intelligence, let them assemble themselves upon the mountains



mountain of Samaria, ver. 9. There, upon a throne high and lifted up, the judgment is set, Samaria is the criminal that is to be tried, let them be present at the trial, for it shall be (as trials use to be) public, in the face of the country; let them make an appointment to meet there from all parts, to judge between God and his vineyard; God appeals to all impartial righteous men, *Izek. xxiii. 45.* They will all subscribe to the equity of his proceedings, when they see how the case stands. Note, God's controversies with sinners do not fear a scrutiny, even Philistines and Egyptians will be made to see and say, that *the ways of the Lord are equal*, but *our ways are unequal*. They are likewise summoned to attend, not only that they may justify God and be witnesses for him that he deals fairly, but that they may themselves take warning, for if judgment begin at the house of God, as they see it doth, what shall be the end of those that are strangers to him? *1 Pet. iv. 17.* If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry? Or this intimates that the sin of Israel had been so notorious that the neighbour nations could come in witnesses against them, and therefore it was fit their punishment should be so. If it could have been concealed, we would have said, *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon*; but why should their friends consult their reputation, when they themselves do not consult it? If they are grown impudent in sin, let them hear the shame, publish it in Ashdod, in Egypt.

1. Let them see how black the charge is, and how well proved: let them observe the behaviour of the inhabitants of Samaria, let them look off from the adjacent hills, and they may see how rude and boisterous they are, and hear how loud the cry of their sin is, as was that of Sodom. (1.) Look into their streets and you will see nothing but riot and disorder, great tumults in the midst thereof; reason and justice are upon all occasions run down by the noise and fury of an outrageous mob; the dominion of which is the sin and shame of any people, and is likely to be their ruin. (2.) Look into their prisons, and you see them filled with injured innocents, the oppressed are in the midst thereof, thrown down and crushed by their oppressors, overpowered and overwhelmed, and they had no comforter, *Eccles. iv. 1.* (3.) Look into their courts of justice, and they who preside in those courts know not to do right, because they have been always accustomed to do wrong: they act as if they had no notion at all of the thing called justice, are in no care to do justice themselves, or to see that others do justice. (4.) Look into their treasures and stores, and you see them replenished with violence and robbery, with that which was unjustly got, and is still unjustly kept; thus they have braped vengeance together for the last days, but it will prove a treasure of wrath against the day of wrath. It may well be said, those know not to do right, who think to enrich themselves by doing wrong.

2. Let them see how heavy the doom is, and how well executed, ver. 11, 12. (1.) Their country shall be invaded and ruined, and observe how the punishment answers the sin; (1.) Great tumults are in the midst of the land, and therefore an adversary shall be even round about the land; the Assyrian forces shall surround it, and break in upon it on every side. Note, When sin is harboured and indulged in the midst of a people, they can expect no other but that adversaries should be round about them, so that go which way they will they go into the mouth of danger, *Luke xix. 43.* (2.) They strengthened themselves in their wickedness, but the enemy shall bring down their strength from them, that strength which they abused in oppressing the poor, and doing violence to all about them. Note, That power which is made an instrument of unrighteousness will justly be brought down, and broken. (3.) They stored up robbery in their palaces, and therefore their palaces shall be spoiled; for what is got and kept wrongfully, will not be kept long. Even palaces will be no protection to fraud and oppression; but the greatest of men if they have spoiled others shall themselves be spoiled, for the Lord is the avenger of all such. (4.) Their countrymen shall not escape, ver. 12. They shall be in the hands of the enemy, as a lamb in the mouth of a lion, all devoured and eaten up, and they shall be utterly unable to make any resistance; and if any do make their escape, so as neither to fall by the sword, nor to go into captivity, yet they shall be very few, and those of the meanest and least considerable, like *two legs* or shanks of a lamb, or it may be a piece of an ear, which the lion drops, or the shepherd takes from him when he has eaten the whole body; so perhaps here and there one may escape from Samaria and from Damascus, when the king of Assyria shall fall upon them both; but none to make any account of: and those that do escape, it shall be with the utmost difficulty and hazard, by hiding themselves in the corner of a bed, or under the bed's feet; which intimates that their spirits shall be quite cowed and broken, and they shall sneak shamefully in the time of danger; they shall not hide themselves in dens and caves, but in the corner of a bed, or the piece of a bed, such as poor people must be content with. They shall very narrowly escape; as it is foretold concerning the last destruction of Jerusalem, that there shall be *two in a bed together, one taken and the other left*. Note, When God's judgments come forth against a people with commission, it will be in vain to think of out-running them. Some make their dwelling in the corner of a bed, and in a couch, to speak their present security and sensuality; they are at ease, as in a bed, or on a couch, but when God comes to contend with them he shall make them uneasy, shall take them away out of the bed of their sloth and slumber; those that stretch themselves lazily upon their couches when God's judgments are abroad, shall go captive with the first that go captive.

2. Notice is given of it to themselves, ver. 12. Let this be testified, and heard in the house of Jacob, among all the seed of Israel, for it is spoken by the Lord God, the God of hosts, who hath authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it; let them know from him, that the day is at hand when God will visit the transgressions of Israel upon him; i. e. when he will enquire into them, and reckon for them; there will come a day of visitation, a day of punishment, and in that day, all those things they are proud of and put confidence in shall fail them, and so they shall smart for the sins they have been guilty of about them.

1. Woe to their altars, for God will visit them. He will enquire into the sins they have been guilty of at their altars, and bring into the account all their superstition and idolatry, all their expenses on their false gods, and all their expectations from them; and he will lay the altars themselves under the marks of his displeasure; for the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground, and with them the altar itself demolished and broken to pieces. We find the altar at Bethel prophesied against, *1 Kings xiii. 2.* and immediately rent, ver. 3. and that prophecy fulfilled when *Jesab* burnt men's bones upon it, *2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16.* This here seconds that prophecy, and seems to point at the same event. Note, If men will not destroy idolatrous altars, God will, and those with them that had them in veneration. Some make the horns of the altar to signify all those things which they flee to for refuge, and trust in, and which they make their sanctuary: they shall all be cut off, so that they shall have nothing to take hold of.

2. Woe to their houses, for God will visit them too: he will enquire into the sins they have been guilty of in their houses, the robbery they have stored up in their houses, and the luxury in which they lived; and, ver. 18. I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house. Their nobility and gentry, and rich merchants, had their winter-houses in the city, and their summer-houses in the country, so nice were they in guarding against the in-

convenience of the winter, when the country was thought too cold, and of the summer when the city was thought too hot; though the climate of that good land was so temperate, like that of ours, that neither the cold nor heat were ever in extremity. They indulged a foolish affectation of change and variety, but God will either by war, or by the earthquake, smite both the winter-house and the summer-house; neither shall serve to shelter them from his judgments: the houses of ivory (so called because either the ceiling or wainscot, or some of the ornaments of them were edged or inlaid with ivory) those shall perish, shall be burnt or pulled down, and the great houses shall have an end, the most splendid and spacious houses, the houses of their great men, they shall no longer be, or at least be no longer theirs. Note, The pomp and pleasantness of men's houses will be so far from fortifying them against God's judgments, that it will make them the more grievous and vexatious; as their extravagance about them will be put upon the score of their sins and follies.

## CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, (1.) The oppressors in Israel are threatened for their oppression of the poor, ver. 1—3. (2.) The idolaters in Israel being joined to idols, are given up to their own lusts, ver. 4, 5. (3.) All the sins of Israel are aggravated from their incorrigibility in them, and their refusal to return and reform, notwithstanding the various rebukes of providence they had been under, ver. 6—11. (4.) They are invited yet at length to humble themselves before God, since it is impossible for them to make their part good against him, ver. 12, 13.

1. **H**EAR this word, ye kine of Basban, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. 2. The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo the day shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks. 3. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her, and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD. 4. ¶ Come to Beth-el and transgress, at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years. 5. And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free-offering; for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

It is here foretold in the name of God, that oppressors shall be humbled, and idolaters shall be hardened.

1. That proud oppressors shall be humbled for their oppressions; for he that doth wrong shall receive according to the wrong that he has done. Now observe,

(1.) How their sin is described, ver. 1. They are compared to the kine of Basban, which were a breed of cattle very large and strong, especially if, though bred there, they were fed upon the mountain of Samaria, where the pastures were extraordinary fat; Amos had been a herdsman, and he speaks in the dialect of his calling, comparing the rich and great men, that lived in luxury and wantonness to the kine of Basban, that were wanton and unruly, would not be kept within the bounds of their own pasture, but broke through the hedges, broke down all the fences, and trespassed upon the neighbouring grounds; and not only so, but pushed and gored the lesser cattle that were not a match for them.

They that had their summer houses upon the mountains of Samaria, when they went thither for fresh air, were as mischievous as the kine upon the mountains of Basban, and as injurious to those about them. (1.) They oppress the poor and needy themselves, they crush them to squeeze something to themselves out of them. They take advantage of their poverty and necessity, and inability to help themselves, to make them poorer, and more necessitous than they are. They make use of their power as judges and magistrates for the invading of men's rights and properties, the poor not excepted; for they made no conscience of robbing even the hospital. (2.) They are in confederacy with them that do so: They say to their masters, i. e. to the masters of the poor, that abuse them, and violently take from them what they have, when they ought to have relieved them, they say to them, Bring, and let us drink, let us feast with you upon the gains of your oppression, and then we will protect you, and stand by you in it, and reject the appeals of the poor against you. Note, What is got by extortion is commonly made use of as provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof; and therefore men are tyrants to the poor, because they are slaves to their appetites; bring, and let us drink is the language of those that crush the needy, as if the tears of the oppressed mingled with their wine made it drink the better. And by their associations for drinking and revelling, and an excess of riot, they strengthen their combinations for persecution and oppression, and harden the hearts of one another in it.

(2.) How their punishment is described, ver. 2, 3. God will take them away with hooks, and their posterity with fish-hooks, i. e. he will send the Assyrian army upon them that shall make a prey of them, shall not only inclose the body of the nation in their net, but shall angle for particular persons, and take them prisoners and captives as with hooks and fish-hooks, shall draw them out of their own land as fish are drawn out of the water, which is their element, they and their children with them; or, they in their day shall be drawn out by one victorious enemy, and their posterity in their day by another; so that by a succession of destroying judgments they shall at length be wholly extirpated. These kine of Basban thought they could no more be drawn out with a hook and a cord than the Leviathan can, *Job xli. 1, 2.* But God will make them know he has a hook for their nose, and a bridle for their jaws, *Isa. xxxvii. 29.* The enemy shall take them away as easily as the fisherman takes away the little fish, and shall make it their sport and recreation. When the enemy has made himself master of Samaria, then, (1.) Some shall attempt to escape by flight, ye shall go out at the breaches made in the wall of the city, every cow at that which is before her, to shift for her own safety, and make the best of their way; and now the unruly kine of Basban are tamed, and are themselves crushed as they crushed the poor and needy. Note, Those to whom God has given a good pasture, if they are wanton in it, will justly be turned out of it; and those who will not be kept within the hedge of God's precept, forfeit the benefit of the hedge of God's protection, and will be forced in vain to flee through the breaches they have themselves fearfully made in that hedge. (2.) Others shall think to shelter themselves, or at least their best effects in the place, because it is a castle well fortified and a garrison well manned: Ye shall



throughout, so some read it, or throw them, i. e. your posterity, your children, or whatever is dear to you, into the palace, where the enemy will find it ready to be seized. Note, What is got by oppression cannot long be enjoyed with satisfaction.

(3.) How their sentence to this punishment is ratified, *the Lord God hath sworn it by his holiness*; he had often said it, and they regarded it not, they thought God and his prophets did but jest with them; therefore he swears it in his wrath, and what he hath sworn he will not revoke. He swears by his holiness, that attribute of his which is so much his glory, and which is so much glorified in the punishment of wicked people; for as sure as God is a holy God, they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness, shall reap the same.

2. That obstinate idolaters shall be hardened in their idolatries, *ver. 4, 5. Come to Bethel and transgress*: It is spoken ironically, do so, take your course, multiply your transgressions by multiplying your sacrifices, for this liketh you, but what will ye do in the end hereof? Here we see, (1.) How intent they were upon the service of their idols, and how willing they were to be at cost upon them; they brought their sacrifices, and their tithes, and their free-offerings, hoping that therein they should be accepted of God, but it was all an abomination to him. The profuseness of idolaters in the service of their false gods may shame our strait-handedness in the service of the true and living God. (2.) How they mimicked God's institutions: They had their daily sacrifice at the altar of Bethel, as God had at his altar: they had their thank-offerings as God had, only they allowed leaven in them which God had forbidden, because their priests did not like to have the bread so heavy and tasteless as it would be if it had not leaven in it, or something to ferment it. Holy bread would not serve them, unless it were pleasant bread. (3.) How well pleased they were with these services themselves; *this liketh you, O ye children of Israel. So ye love*. What was their own invention they were fond of and wedded to, and thought it must therefore be pleasing to God, because it was agreeable to their own fancy. (4.) How they are upbraided with it. *Come to Bethel, to Gilgal, bring the sacrifices and tithes yourselves, proclaim and publish to the nation the free-offerings*, pressing them to bring in abundance of such, go on in this way: that is, (1.) It is plain you are resolved to do it whatever God and conscience say to the contrary. (2.) Your prophets shall let you alone in it, and not admonish you as they have done, for it is to no purpose; *let no man strive or rebuke his neighbour*. (3.) Your foolish hearts shall be more and more darkened and belotted, and you shall be quite given up to these strong delusions to believe a lie. (4.) What will you get by it? Come to Bethel, and multiply your sacrifices, and see what the better you will be, what returns you will have to your sacrifices, what bread you will stand you in in the day of distress; *you shall be ashamed of Bethel your confidence*, Jer. xlviii. 13. (5.) Come and transgress, come and multiply your transgression, that you may fill up the measure of your iniquity, and be ripened for ruin. Thus Christ said to Judas, *What thou dost do quickly*; and to the Jews, *fill ye up the measure of your fathers*, Matt. xxiii. 32.

6. ¶ And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 7. And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. 8. So two or three cities wandered into one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 9. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 10. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain by the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 11. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 12. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. 13. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and readeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.

Here, 1. God complains of his people's incorrigibility under the judgments which he had brought upon them, in order to their humiliation and reformation. He had by several tokens intimated to them his displeasure, with this design, that they might by repentance make their peace with him, but it had not that effect: It is five times repeated in these verses, as the burden of the charge, *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord*; you have been several times corrected, but in vain; you are not reclaimed, there is no sign of amendment. You have been sent for by one messenger after another, but you have not come back, you have not come home. (1.) This intimates, that that which God designed in all his providential rebukes was to reduce them to their allegiance; to influence them to return to him. (2.) That if they had returned to their God they should have been accepted, he would have bid them welcome, and the troubles they were in should have been removed. (3.) That the reason why God sent further troubles was, because former troubles had not done the work, otherwise it is no pleasure to the Almighty that he should afflict. (4.) That God was grieved at their obstinacy, and took it unkindly that they should force him to do that which he did so unwillingly, *you have not returned to me from whom you have revolted, to me with whom you are in covenant, to me that stand ready to receive you, to me who have so often called you*.

Now to aggravate their incorrigibility, and to justify himself in inflicting greater judgments, he recounts the lesser judgments with which he had tried to bring them to repentance.

1. There had sometimes been a scarcity of provisions, though there was no visible cause of it, *ver. 6. I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities*, for you had no meat to chew, whereby your teeth might be fouled; especially no flesh, which dirties the teeth; or emptying of teeth, nothing to fill your mouths with. Bread, the staff of life, has been wanting, for you have sown much and brought in little, as Hag. i. 9. Some think this refers to that seven years famine that was in Elitha's time, which we read of 2 Kings viii. 1. Now when God thus took away their corn in the season thereof, because they had prepared it for Baal, they should have said, we will go and return to our first husband, having paid dear for leaving him; but it had not that effect, they have not returned to me, saith the Lord.

2. Sometimes they had wanted rain, and then of course they wanted the fruits of the earth; this evil was of the Lord, *I have withholden the rain from you*; God has the key of the clouds, and if he shut up who can open? *ver. 7. The rain was withholden when there were yet three months to the harvest*, at the time when they used to have it, and therefore the withholding of it was an extraordinary thing, and if the course of nature was altered, they must therein own the hand of the God of nature; and it was at a time when they most needed it, and therefore the want of it was a very sure judgment, and blasted their expectations of a crop at harvest.

And one circumstance which made this very remarkable was, that when there were some places that wanted rain, and withered for want of it, there were other places near adjoining that had it in abundance. God caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another, in the same country; nay, he caused it to rain upon one field, one piece of a field, and it was thereby made fruitful and flourishing, but on the next field, on the other side of the hedge, nay, on another part of the same field it rained not at all, and it was so long without rain that all the products of it withered.

No doubt this was literally true, and there were many instances of it which were generally taken notice of. Now, (1.) By this it appeared that the withholding of the rain was not casual, but by a divine direction and disposal; that the cloud which watereth the earth is turned round about by the counsels of God to do whatsoever he commandeth it, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy, Job. xxxvii. 12, 13. Rain doth not go by planets, (as common people speak) but as God sends it by his winds. (2.) We have reason to think that those cities on which it rained not, were the most infamous for wickedness, such as Bethel and Gilgal, *ver. 4.* and that those on which it rained, were such as retained something of religion and virtue among them: And so in the town fields it rained or rained not upon the piece, according as the owner was; for we are sure the curse of the Lord is in the house and upon the ground of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just, and his field is a field that the Lord hath blessed. (3.) It would be the greater grief and vexation to those whose fields withered for want of rain, to see their neighbour's fields well watered and flourishing. My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry, Isa. lxi. 13. The wicked shall see it and be grieved. Probably those that were oppressed were rained upon, and so they recovered their losses, while the oppressors withered, and so lost their gains. (4.) Yet as to the nation in general, it was a mixture of mercy with the judgment, and consequently strengthened the call to repentance and reformation, and encouraged them to hope for all mercy in their returns to God, since there was so much mercy even in God's rebukes of them. But because they did not make a good use of this gracious allay to the extremity of the judgment, they had not the benefit of it which otherwise they might have had, for *ver. 8. Two or three cities wandered at uncertainty, as beggars unto one city to drink water*, and if possible, to have some to carry home with them, but they were not satisfied; it was but here and there one city that had water, while many wanted, and then it was not as usual, *usur communis aquarum*; they that had it had occasion for it, or knew not how soon they might, and therefore could afford but little to them that wanted, saying, *left there be not enough for us and you*. They that came drank water, but they were not satisfied, because they drank it by measure, and with abstinence, and they that drank of this water shall thirst again, John iv. 13. They were not satisfied because their desires were greedy, and what they had God did not bless to them, Hag. i. 6.

And now one would think when they met with all this disappointment, they should have considered their ways and repented; but it had not that effect, *yet have ye not returned to me*, no not so much as to pray in a right manner for the former and latter rain, Zech. x. 1. See the folly of carnal hearts, they will wander from city to city, from one creature to another, in pursuit of satisfaction, and still they miss of it; they labour for that which satisfieth not, Isa. lv. 2. and yet after all they will not return to God, will not incline their ear to him in whom they might have satisfaction. The preaching of the gospel is as rain; God sometimes blesseth one place with it more than another, some countries, some cities, are like Gideon's fleece wet with this dew, while the ground about is dry; all withers where this rain is wanting; but it were well if people were but as wise for their souls as they are for their bodies and when they have not this rain near them, would go and seek it where it is to be had, and if they seek aright they shall not seek in vain.

3. Sometimes the fruits of their ground were eaten up by caterpillars, or blasted with mildew, *ver. 9. heaven and earth are armed against those who have made God their enemy*; when God pleased, that is, when he was displeased, (1.) They suffered by a malignant air; the influences of which either too hot or too cold blasted their fruits, with a force that could be neither discerned nor resisted, and against which there was no defence. (2.) They suffered by malignant animals. Their vineyards and gardens yielded their increase in great abundance, so did their fig-trees and olive-trees, but the palmer-worm devoured them before the fruits were ripe and fit to be gathered in; this was either the same judgment with that which we read of, Joel i. 4—6. or lesser judgment of the same nature sent before to give warning of that. But they did not take warning; *yet have ye not returned unto me*.

4. Sometimes the plague had raged among them, and the sword of war had cut off multitudes, *ver. 10. The pestilence is God's messenger*, this he sent among them, with directions whom to strike dead, and it was done; it was a pestilence after the manner of Egypt: deaths were scattered among them by the hand of a destroying angel at midnight. And perhaps this pestilence, as that of Egypt, lightened upon the first-born. In the way of Egypt, so the margin; when they were making their escape to Egypt, or going thither to seek for aid, the pestilence seized them by the way, and stopped their journey. The sword of war is likewise the sword of the Lord, this was drawn among them with commission; and then it slew their young men, the strength of the present generation, and the seed of the next. God saith, *I have slain them*, he avows the execution; *The slain of the Lord are many*. The enemy took away their horses, and converted them to their own use; and the dead carcases of those that were slain either with sword or pestilence, were so many, and for want of surviving friends were left so long unburied, that the stench of their camps came up into their nostrils, and was both noisome and dangerous, and might put them in mind of the offensiveness of their sin to God. And yet this did not prevail to humble and reclaim them; *you have not returned to him that smiteth you*. Such a useful, woeful sight as this prevailed not to make them religious.



5. In these and other judgments some were remarkably *cut off* and made monuments of *justice*; others were remarkably *spared* and made monuments of *mercy*, the setting of which, the one over against the other, one would have thought likely to work upon them, but it had not its effect, *ver. 11.* (1.) Some were *quite ruined*, their families destroyed, and themselves in them, *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah*, perhaps consumed them with lightning, as Sodom was, or the houses some other way burnt to the ground, and the inhabitants in them. Sodom and Gomorrah are said to be *condemned with an overthrow*, and so made an example, 2 Pet. ii. 6. God had threatened to destroy the whole land with such an overthrow as that of Sodom, *Deut. xxix. 23.* But he began with some particular persons, whose *sins went beforehand to judgment*. (2.) Others very *narrowly escaped*: ye were many of you as a *fire-brand plucked out of the burning*, like Lot out of Sodom, when the fire had already kindled upon you, and yet you hate sin never the more for the danger it has brought you to, nor love God ever the more for the deliverance he wrought for you; you that have been so signally delivered, and in such a distinguishing way, yet *have not returned unto me*.

2. God in the close calls upon his people, yet at length in this their day to understand the things that belong to their peace, before they were hid from their eyes, *ver. 12, 13.* Observe here,

1. How God threatens them with *forer judgments* than any they had yet been under. Therefore, seeing you have not been wrought upon by correction hitherto, *Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel.* He doth not say *how* he will do, but it shall be something worse than had come yet, *John v. 14.* Or, *thus I will go on to do unto thee*, following one judgment with another, like the plagues of Egypt, till I have made a full end. Nothing else but reformation will prevent the ruin of a sinful people. If they *turn* not to him, his anger is not *turned away*, but *his hand is stretched out still.* I will *punish you yet seven times more, if you will not be reformed*, so it was written in the law, *Lev. xvi. 23.*

2. How he awakens them therefore to think of making their peace with God. *Seeing I will do this unto thee*; and there is no remedy, *Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*: That is, (1.) Consider how unable thou art to meet him as a *combatant*; some make it to be spoken by way of irony or challenge; prepare to meet God that is coming forth to contend with thee; what armour of proof canst thou put on? What courage canst thou steel thyself with? Alas, it is but putting *briars and thorns* before a consuming fire, *Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.* Art thou able with less than *ten thousand* to meet him that comes forth against thee with more than *thou twenty thousand*? *Luke xiv. 31.* (2.) Resolve therefore to meet him as a *penitent*, as a humble *suppliant*; to meet him as *thy God*, in covenant with thee, to submit, and stand it out no longer. We must prepare to *meet God in the way of his judgments*, *Isa. xxvii. 8.* to take hold on his strength that we may make peace. Note, Since we cannot flee from God we are concerned to prepare to meet him, and therefore he gives us warning that we may prepare. When we are to meet him in his ordinances, we must prepare to meet him, prepare to seek him.

3. How he sets forth the greatness and power of God as a reason why we should prepare to meet him, *ver. 13.* If he be such a God as he is here described to be, it is folly to contend with him, and our duty and interest to make our peace with him; it is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy. (1.) He *formed the mountains*, made the earth, the strongest stateliest parts of it, and by the word of his power still upholdeth it and them. Whatever are the products of the everlasting mountains he formed them, whatever *salvation is hoped for from hills and mountains*, he is the founder of it, *Psal. lxxxix. 11, 12.* He that formed the *great mountains* can make them plain when they stand in the way of his people's salvation. (2.) He *createth the wind*, the power of the air is derived from him, and directed by him; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures; and orders from what point of the compass it shall blow; and he that made it rules it, *even the winds and the sea obey him.* (3.) He *declares unto man what is his thought*, he makes known his counsel by his servants the prophets to the children of men, the thought of his justice against impenitent sinners, and the thought of good he thinks towards those that repent. He can also *make known*, for he perfectly *knows* the thought that is in man's heart, he *understands it afar off*, and in the day of conviction will set the evil thoughts among other the sins of sinners in order before them. (4.) He often *makes the morning darkness*, by thick clouds overspreading the sky presently after the sun rose bright and glorious; so when we look for prosperity and joy, he can dash our expectations with some unlooked for calamity. (5.) He *treads upon the high places of the earth*, is not only higher than the highest, but has dominion over all; tramples upon proud men, and upon the idols that were worshipped in the highest places. (6.) *Jehovah, the God of hosts is his name*, for he has his being of himself, and is the fountain of all being, and all the hosts of heaven and earth are at his command. Let us humble ourselves before this God, prepare to meet him, and give all diligence to make him our God, for happy the people whose God he is, that have all this power engaged for them.

## C H A P. V.

The scope of this chapter is to prosecute the exhortation given to Israel in the close of the foregoing chapter, to prepare to meet his God; he here tells them, (1.) What preparation they must make, they must seek the Lord, and not seek any more to idols, *ver. 4—8.* they must seek good and love it, *ver. 14, 15.* (2.) Why they must make this preparation to meet their God, (1.) Because of the present deplorable condition they were in, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) Because it was by sin they were brought into such a condition, *ver. 7—12, 11, 12.* (3.) Because it would be their happiness to seek God, and he was ready to be found of them, *ver. 3, 9—14.* (4.) Because he would proceed in his wrath to their utter ruin if they did not seek him, *ver. 5, 6—13—16, 17.* (5.) Because all their confidences would fail them, if they did not seek unto God, and make him their friend. (1.) Their profane contempt of God's judgments, and setting them at defiance, would not secure them, *ver. 8—20.* (2.) Their external services in religion, and the shews of devotion would not avail to turn away the wrath of God, *ver. 21—24.* (3.) Their having been long in possession of church-privileges, and in a course of holy duties, would not be their protection, while all along they had kept up their idolatrous customs, *ver. 25—27.* They have therefore no way left them to save themselves but by repentance and reformation.

1. **H**EAR ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel.  
2. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.  
3. For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that

went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

This chapter begins as those two next foregoing began, with *hear this word*. Where God has a mouth to speak, we must have an ear to hear; it is our duty it is our interest, yet so stupid are the most of men that they need to be again and again called upon to *hear the word of the Lord*; to give audience, to give attention; *hear this word*. This convincing awakening word must be heard and needed, as well as words of comfort and peace; the word that is taken up *against us*, as well as that which makes for us; for whether we hear or forbear, the word of God shall take effect, and not a tittle of it shall fall to the ground. It is the word which I take up, not the prophet only, but the God that sent him. It is the word that the Lord hath spoken, *chap. iii. 1.*

The word to be heard is a *lamentation*, a lamentable account of the present calamitous state of the kingdom of Israel, and a lamentable prediction of its utter destruction. Their condition is sad, *The virgin of Israel is fallen*, *ver. 2.* is come down from what she was; that state, though not pure and chaste as a virgin, yet was *beautiful and gay*, and had her charms, *looked high herself*, and was *courted* by many as a virgin, but *she is fallen* into contempt and poverty, and is universally slighted; nay, and their condition is helpless; *she shall no more rise*, shall never recover her former dignity again. God had lately begun to *cut Israel short*, 2 Kings x. 32. and because they repented not, it was not long before he *cut Israel down*.

1. Their *princes* that should have helped them up were *disabled*; she is *forsaken upon her land*. Not only those she was in alliance with abroad failed her, but her friends at home *deserted* her; she had not been carried captive into a strange land, if she had not first been *forsaken upon her own land*, and *thrown to the ground* there, and all her true interests *abandoned* by those that should have had them at heart. *There is none to raise her up*, none that can do it, none that cares to *lend her a hand*.

2. Their *people* that should have helped them up were *diminished*, *ver. 3.* The city that had a militia a thousand strong, and in the beginning of the war had furnished out a thousand effective men, able-bodied and well armed, when they come to review their troops after the battle, shall find but a *hundred left*; and in proportion, the city that sent out a *hundred* shall have but *ten* come back; so great a slaughter shall be made, and *so few left to the house of Israel* for the public service and safety.

Scarce one in ten shall escape of the hands that should relieve this abject, this dejected nation. Note, The lessening of the numbers of God's spiritual Israel by death or desertion, is just matter for *lamentation*; for by whom shall Jacob arise, by whom shall the decays of piety be repaired, when he is thus *made small*?

4. ¶ For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live. 5. But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought. 6. Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel. 7. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, 8. Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name: 9. That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress. 10. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh up-rightly. 11. For as much therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. 12. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. 13. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time: for it is an evil time. 14. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. 15. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

This is a message from God to the house of Israel, in which,

1. They are *told of their faults*, that they might see what occasion there was for them to *repent and reform*, and that when they were called to return, they might not need to ask *wherein shall we return*? God tells them in general, *ver. 12.* I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins; and you shall be made to know them too.

In our penitent reflections upon our sins, we must consider, as God doth in his judicial remarks upon them, and will do in the great day. (1.) That they are *very numerous*; they are our *manifold transgressions*; sins of various kinds, and often repeated. O what a multitude of vain and vile thoughts lodge within us! What a multitude of idle, foolish, wicked words have been spoken by us! In what a multitude of instances have we gratified and indulged our corrupted appetites and passions! And how many are our omissions of duty, and in duty! Who can understand his errors? Who can tell how often he offends? God knows how many, just how many our transgressions are, none of them pass him unobserved; we know they are to us innumerable, *more than the hairs of our head*; and we have reason to see what danger we have brought ourselves into, and what abundance of work we have made for repentance by our *manifold transgressions*, by the numberless number of our sins of daily incursion. (2.) That some of them are *very heinous*, they are our *mighty sins*; sins that are *more exceeding sinful* in their own nature, and by them committed presumptuously, and with a high hand. Sins against the light of nature, flagrant crimes that are *mighty* to overpower your convictions, and to pull down judgments upon you.

He



He instances in some of these mighty sins. (1.) They corrupted the worship of God, and turned to idols; that is implied *ver. 5.* that they had sought to Bethel, where one of the golden calves was; they had frequented Gilgal, a place which they chose to set up idols in, because it had been made famous in the days of Joshua by God's wonderful appearances to and for his people. Beer-sheba likewise, a place that had been famous in the days of the patriarchs, was now another rendezvous of idols; as we find also, *chap. viii. 14.* And thither they passed, though it lay at a distance in the land of Judah. Now having thus shamefully gone a whoring from God, no doubt they were concerned to return to him. (2.) They perverted justice among themselves, *ver. 7.* ye turn judgment to wormwood, i. e. ye make your administrations of justice bitter and nauseous, and highly displeasing both to God and man.

That fruit is become a weed, a weed in the garden; as nothing more venerable, nothing more valuable than justice duly administered, so nothing is more hurtful, nothing more abominable than designedly doing wrong under colour and pretence of doing right. *Corruptio optimi est pessima.* Ye leave off righteousness in the earth; as if those that do wrong were accountable to the God of heaven only, and not to the princes and judges of the earth: thus it was as before the flood, when the earth was filled with violence. (3.) They were very oppressive to the poor, and made them poorer; they tread upon the poor, *ver. 11.* trampled upon them, hectoring over them, made them their footstool, and were most imperious and barbarous to those that were most obsequious and submissive; they cared not what shame and slavery they put them to who were poor, and such as they could get nothing by. That was it that the judges aimed at, nothing but to enrich themselves, and therefore they took from the poor burdens of wheat; took it by extortion, either by way of bribe or usury; the poor had no other way to save themselves from being trodden upon, and trodden to dirt by them, but by presenting to them horse-loads of that corn which they and their families should have had to subsist upon; and they forced them to do it. They took from the poor debts of wheat, so some read it. It was legally due either for rent, or for corn lent, but they exacted it with rigour from those who were disabled by the providence of God to pay it, as *Neh. v. 2—5.* In demanding and recovering even of a just debt, we must take heed lest we act either unjustly or uncharitably. This sin of oppression they are again charged with, *ver. 12.* They afflict the just, by turning the edge of the law and of the sword of justice against those that are the innocent and quiet in the land; they therefore hated men because they were more righteous than themselves, and he that departed from evil thereby made himself a prey to them. They take a bribe from the rich to patronize and protect them in oppressing the poor; so that he who has money in his hand is sure to have the judge and judgment on his side, be his cause never so bad. Thus they turn aside the poor in the gate, in the courts of justice, from their right. If the poor sue for their right, who cannot bribe them, or are so honest that they will not, though they have it never so clear in view, and never so near, yet they are turned away from it by their unrighteous sentence, and cannot come at it. And therefore the prudent will keep silence, *ver. 13.* Men will reckon it their prudence, when they are wronged and injured, to be silent, and make no complaints to the magistrates, for it will be to no purpose, they shall not have justice done them. (4.) They were malicious persecutors of God's faithful ministers and people, *ver. 10.* Their hearts were so fully set in them to do evil, that they could not bear to be reproved. (1.) By the ministry of the word; by the reading and expounding of the law, and the messages which the prophets delivered to them in the name of the Lord. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, in the gate of the Lord's house, or in their courts of justice, or in the places of concourse, where wisdom was lifting up her voice *Prov. i. 21.* Reprovers in the gate are reprovers by office, these they hated, counting them their enemies because they told them the truth, as Ahab hated Micaiah. They not only despised them, but had an enmity to them, and sought to do them mischief. Those that hate reproof love ruin. (2.) By the conversation of their honest neighbours. Though things were generally very bad, yet there were some among them that spoke uprightly, that made conscience of what they said, and as it was their praise, so it was the shame of those that spoke deceitfully, and condemned them, as Noah's faith condemned the unbelief of the old world, and for that reason they abhorred them; they were such inveterate enemies to the thing called honesty, that they could not endure the sight of an honest man.

All that have any sense of the common interest of mankind will love and value such as speak uprightly, for veracity is the bond of human society; to what a pitch of folly and madness then are they arrived, who having banished all notions of justice out of their own hearts, would have them banished out of the world too, and so put mankind into a state of war, for they abhor him that speaketh uprightly? And for this reason the prudent shall keep silence in that time, *ver. 13.* Prophets cannot, dare not keep silence, the impulse they are under will not allow them to act by prudential considerations; they must cry aloud and not spare; but as for other wise and good men, they shall keep silence, and shall reckon it is their prudence to do so, because it is an evil time. (1.) They shall think it dangerous to complain, and therefore shall keep silence; this was one way in which they afflicted the just, that by false suggestions and strange innuendoes they made men offenders for a word, *Isa. xxix. 21.* and therefore the prudent, who were wise as serpents, because they knew not how what they said might be misinterpreted, and misrepresented, were so cautious as to say nothing, lest they should run themselves into a premature, because it was an evil time. Note, Through the iniquity of the times as good men are hid, so good men are silent, and it is their wisdom to be so; little said soon amended. But it is their comfort that they may speak freely to God, when they know not who else they can speak freely to. (2.) They shall think it fruitless to reprove. They see what wickedness is committed, and their spirits are stirred up as Paul's at Athens; but they think it prudent not to bear an open testimony against it, because it is to no purpose. They are joined to their idols, let them alone. Let no man strive or rebuke another; for it is but casting pearls before swine. The cautious man will say to a bold reprover, as Erasmus to Luther, *Abi in cellam, & dic, miserere mei, Domine.* Let grave lessons and counsels be kept for better men and better times. And there is a time to keep silence as well as a time to speak, *Eccles. iii. 7.* Evil times will not bear plain dealing, that is, evil men will not. And the *quien* the prophet here speaks of had reason to think themselves evil men indeed, when wise and good men thought it in vain to speak to them, and were afraid of having any thing to do with them.

2. They are told of their danger, and what judgments they lay exposed to for their sins. (1.) The places of their idolatry are in danger to be ruined in the first place, *ver. 5.* Gilgal, the head quarters of idolatry, shall go into captivity; not only its inhabitants but its images and Bethel with its golden calf shall come to nought. The victorious enemy shall make nothing of it, so easily shall it be spoiled, and shall bring it to nothing, so effectually shall it be spoiled. Idols were always vanity and things of nought, and so they shall prove when God appears to abolish them. (2.) The body of the kingdom is in danger of being ruined with them, *ver. 6.* There is

danger, lest if you seek him not in time he break out like a fire in the house of Joseph and devour it; for our God is a righteous judge, is a consuming fire, and the men of Israel, as criminals, are stubble before him; woe to those that make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath; it follows, and there shall be none to quench it in Bethel; there their idols were, and their idolatrous priests, thither they brought their sacrifices, and there they offered up their prayers; but God tells them, that when the fire of his judgments kindles upon them, all the gods they served at Bethel should not be able to quench it; should not turn away the judgment, or be any relief to them under it. Thus they that make an idol of the world will find it insufficient to protect them when God comes to reckon with them for their spiritual idolatry. (3.) What they have got by oppression and extortion shall be taken from them, *ver. 11.* Ye have built houses of hewn stone, which you thought would be lasting, but you shall not dwell in them, for your enemies shall burn them down, or possess them for themselves, or take you into captivity; Ye have planted pleasant vineyards, have contrived how to make them every way agreeable, and have promised yourselves many a pleasant walk in them, but ye shall be forced to walk off, and shall never drink wine of them.

The law had tenderly provided, that if a man had built a house or planted a vineyard, he should be at his liberty to return from the wars, *Deut. xx. 5, 6.* But now the necessity would be so urgent that it would not be allowed; all must go to the battle, and many of those who had lately been building and planting should fall in battle, and never enjoy what they had been labouring for. What is not honestly got is not likely to be long enjoyed.

3. They are told their duty, and have great encouragement to set about it in good earnest, and good reason. The duties here prescribed to them are godliness and honesty: seriousness in their applications to God, and justice in their dealings with men; and each of these are here pressed upon them with proper arguments to enforce the exhortation.

1. They are here exhorted to be sincere and devout in their addresses to God, *ver. 4.* God saith to the house of Israel, seek ye me. And good reason, for should not a people seek unto their God? *Isa. viii. 19.* Whither else should they go but to their Protector? Israel was a prince with God, let his descendants seek the Lord, as he did, and they shall be so too. Now in order to their doing this they must abandon their idolatries; God is not sought truly if he be not sought only, for he will endure no rivals: Seek ye the Lord, and seek not Bethel, *ver. 5.* consult not your idol oracles, nor ask at the mouth of the priests of Bethel; seek not to the golden calf there for protection, nor bring your prayers and sacrifices any longer thither or to Gilgal, for you forsake your own mercies, if you observe those lying vanities. But seek the Lord, *ver. 6—17.* enquire after him, enquire of him; seek to know his mind as your rule, to secure his favour as your felicity: to press this exhortation we are bid to consider, (1.) What we shall get by seeking God; it will be our life, we shall find him, and shall be happy in him. So he tells them himself, *ver. 4.* Seek ye me, and ye shall live. So the prophet tells them, *ver. 6.* Seek the Lord, and ye shall live. They that seek perishing gods shall perish with them, *ver. 5.* but they that seek the living God shall live with him: ye shall be delivered from the killing judgments which you are threatened with; your nation shall live, shall recover from its present languishings; your souls shall live, you shall be sanctified and comforted, and made for ever blessed; Ye shall live. (2.) What a God he is whom we are to seek, *ver. 8, 9.* (1.) He is a God of almighty power himself. The idols were impotent things, could do neither good nor evil, and therefore it was folly either to fear or trust them; but the God of Israel, doth every thing, and can do any thing, and therefore we ought to seek to him; he challengeth our homage who has all power in his hand, and it is our interest to have him on our side.

Divers proofs and instances are here given of God's power as Creator in the kingdom of nature, both the founding and governing of that kingdom. Compare *chap. iv. 13.* (1.) The stars are the work of his hands; those stars which the heathens worshipped, *ver. 26.* the stars of your god, those stars are God's creatures and servants. He maketh the seven stars and Orion, two very remarkable constellations, which Amos, a herdsman, while he kept his cattle by night, had particularly observed the motions of. He made them at the first, he still maketh them to be what they are to this earth; and either binds or looseth the sweet influences of Pleiades and Orion, the two constellations here mentioned, *Job. xxxviii. 31—ix. 9.* to which passages Amos seems here to refer, putting them in mind of those ancient discoveries of the glory of God before he was called the God of Israel. (2.) The constant succession of day and night is under his direction, and is kept up by his power and providence. It is he that turns the night, which is dark as the shadow of death, into the morning by the rising of the sun, and by the setting of the sun makes the day dark with night: and the same power can, for humble penitents, easily turn affliction and sorrow into prosperity and joy, but can as easily turn the prosperity of presumptuous sinners into darkness, into utter darkness. (3.) The rain rises and falls as he appoints. He calls for the waters of the sea, out of them vapours are drawn up by the heat of the sun, which gather into clouds, and are poured out upon the face of the earth, to water it and make it fruitful. This was the mercy that had been withheld from them of late, *chap. iv. 7.* and therefore to whom should they apply themselves, but to him who had power to give it? for all the vanities of the heathen could not give rain, nor could the heavens of themselves give showers, *Jer. xiv. 22.* it is God that has made these things, Jehovah is his name, the name by which the God of nature, the God of the whole earth, has made himself known to his people Israel, and covenanted with them.

(2.) As he is a God of almighty power himself, so he giveth strength and power unto his people that seek him, and renews strength to those that had lost it, if they wait upon him for it; for, *ver. 9.* he strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, to such a degree, that the spoiled came against the strong; and make bold and brave attacks upon those that had spoiled them. This is an encouragement to the people to seek the Lord, that if they do so they shall find him able to retrieve their affairs, when they are brought to the lowest ebb: though they are the spoiled, and their enemies are the strong, if they can but engage God for them, they shall soon recruit so as the next time to be not only the aggressors, but the conquerors; they come against the strong to make reprisals, and become masters of it.

2. They are here exhorted to be honest and just in their dealings with men, *ver. 14, 15.* where observe,

1. The duty required. Seek good and not evil. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate; re-establish it there, whence it has been banished, *ver. 7.* Note, Things are not so bad, but that they may be amended, if the right course be taken; we must not despair but that grievances may be redressed and abuses rectified; justice may yet triumph, there where injustice tyrannizeth. In order to this, good must be loved and sought, evil must be hated and no longer sought. We must love good principles, and adhere to them, love to do good, and abound in it; love good people, and good converse, and good duties; and whatever good we do we must do it from a principle of love; do it of choice and with delight. And they who thus love good will seek it, will contrive to do all the good they can, and enquire for opportunities to do it; and endeavour it to the utmost of their



their power. They will also *hate evil*, will abhor the thought of doing an unjust thing; and abstain from all appearance of it.

In vain do we pretend to *seek God* in our devotions, if we do not *seek good* in our whole conversations.

2. The reasons annexed. (1.) This is the *sure way to be happy ourselves*, and to have the continual presence of God with us. *Seek good and not evil, that ye may live*, may escape the punishment of the evil you have fought and loved; *righteousness delivereth from death*, that ye may have the favour of God, which is your life, which is better than life itself; that ye may have comfort in yourselves, and may live to some good purpose. You shall live, for so the Lord God of hosts shall be with you, and be your life: Note, Those that keep in the way of duty have the presence of God with them, as the God of hosts, a God of almighty power. He will be with you as ye have spoken, i. e. as ye have gloried; you shall have that really, which while you went on in unrighteous ways you only seemed to have, and boasted of as if you had. They that truly repent and reform enter into the enjoyment of that comfort, which before they had only flattered themselves with the imagination of. Or, as ye have prayed, when you fought the Lord; Live up to your prayers, and you shall have what you pray for. (2.) This is the *likeliest way to make the nation happy*. If you seek and love that which is good, you may contribute to the saving of the land from ruin. It may be the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph; though there is but a remnant left, if God be gracious to that remnant, it will rise to a great nation again: and if some among them turn from sin, especially if judgment be established in the gate, though we cannot be certain, yet there is great probability that public affairs will take a new and happy turn, and every thing will mend if men mend their lives. Temporal promises are made with an *it may be*, and our prayers must be made accordingly.

16. Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets: and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. 17. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD. 18. Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. 19. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

Here is, 1. A very terrible threatening of destruction approaching, ver. 16. 17. Because they would not take the right course to obtain the favour of God, God would take an effectual course to make them feel the weight of his displeasure. The threatening is introduced with more than ordinary solemnity to strike an awe upon them; it is not the word of the prophet only, if so, it might be made light of, but it is the Lord Jehovah, that has an infinite eternal being, it is the God of hosts that has a boundless irresistible power, and it is Adonia, the Lord, that has an absolute incontestable sovereignty, and an universal dominion, it is he that saith it, who can and will make his words good; and he hath said, (1.) That the land of Israel shall be put in mourning, true mourning; that all places shall be filled with lamentation for the calamities coming upon them. Look into the cities, and wailing shall be in all streets, in the great streets, in the by-streets. Look into the country, and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! we are all undone: the lamentation shall be so great as not to be confined within doors, nor kept within the bounds of decency, but it shall be proclaimed in the streets and highways, and run wild. The husbandman shall be called from the plough by the calamities of his country, to the natural expressions of mourning: and because those will come short of the merits of the cause, such as are skilful of lamentation shall be called to artificial mourning, to put accents upon the lamentations of the real mourners with their *ahone, ahone*. Even in all vineyards, where there used to be nothing but mirth and pleasure, there shall be general wailing, when a foreign force invades the country, lays all waste, and there is no making any head against it, no weapons left but prayers and tears. (2.) That the land of Israel shall be brought to ruin, and the advances of that ruin are the occasion of all this wailing. I will pass through thee, as the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt to destroy the first-born, but then passed over the houses of the Israelites. God's judgments had often passed by them, but now they shall pass through them, shall run them through.

2. A just and severe reproof to those who made light of these threatenings and impudently bid defiance to the justice of God and his judgments, ver. 18. Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord; that really wish for times of war and confusion; as some do who have restless spirits, and long for changes; or who choose to fish in troubled waters, hoping to raise their families, as some had done, upon the ruins of their country: but the prophet tells them, this should be so great a desolation that nobody could get by it. Or it is spoken to those, who in their wailings and lamentations for the calamities they were in, wished they might die, and be rid out of their misery; as Job did with passion. The prophet shews them the folly of this; Do they know what death is to those that are unprepared for it, and how much more terrible it will be than any thing that can befall them in this life? Or rather, it is spoken to those who speak jestingly of that day of the Lord which the prophet spoke so seriously of; they desired it, i. e. they challenged it; they said, Let him do his worst, let him make speed, and hasten his work, Isa. v. 19. Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. iii. 4. It intimates, (1.) That they do not believe it. They say they wish it would come, because they do not believe it will ever come; nor will they believe it unless they see it. (2.) That they do not fear it; though they may have some belief of it, yet they have so little consideration of it, and their mind is so intent upon other things, that they are under no apprehension at all of peril from it; instead of having the conscience to dread it, they have the curiosity to desire it. In answer to this,

1. He shews the folly of those that impatiently wished for any of God's judgments; and made a jest of any of the terrors of the Lord. To what end is it for you that the day of the Lord should come? you will find it both certain and sad; not a thing to be bantered, for it is neither a thing to be questioned whether it will come or no; nor a thing to be turned off with a slight when it doth come. The day of the Lord is darkness and not light, ver. 18. Shall it not be so? ver. 20. Do not your own consciences tell you it will be so? that it will be very dark, and no brightness in it? Note, The day of the Lord will be a dark, dismal, gloomy day to all impenitent sinners: the day of judgment will be so; and sometimes the day of their present

trouble. And when God makes a day dark, all the world cannot make it light.

2. He shews the folly of those that impatiently wished for a change of God's judgments, in hopes the next will be better and more tolerable. They desire the day of the Lord, in hopes to mend themselves, though their hearts and lives be not amended, or however to know the worst. But the prophet tells them they know not what they ask, ver. 19, it is as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him, a beast of prey more cruel and ravenous than a lion. Or as if a man to escape all dangers abroad went into the house for security, and leaned his hand on the wall to rest himself, and there a serpent bit him. Note, Those that are not reformed by the judgments of God will be pursued by them; and if they escape one, another stands ready to seize them: fear and the pit and snare surround them, Isa. xxiv. 17, 18. It is madness therefore to defy the day of the Lord.

21. ¶ I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. 22. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. 23. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs: for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. 24. But let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream. 25. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? 26. But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. 27. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.

The scope of these verses is to shew how little God valued their shews of devotion, nay, how much he detested them, while they went on in their sins. Observe,

1. How unpleasing, nay, how displeasing their hypocritical services were to God. They had their feast days at Bethel, in imitation of those at Jerusalem, in which they pretended to rejoice before God; they had their solemn assemblies for religious worship, in which they put on the gravity of those who come before God, as his people come, and sit before him as his people sit; they offered to God burnt-offerings, to the honour of God, together with the meat-offerings, that by the law were to be offered with them; they offered the peace-offerings to implore the favour of God, and they offered them of fat beasts they had, ver. 21, 22. In imitation likewise of the temple-music, they had the noise of their songs, and the melody of their viols, ver. 23. vocal and instrumental music, with which they praised God; with these services they hoped to make God amend for the sins they had committed, and to obtain leave to go on in sin; and therefore they were so far from being acceptable to God that they were abominable. He hated, he despised their feast days, not only despised them as no valuable services done to him, but hated them as an affront and provocation to him, as we hate to see men dissemble with us, pretend a respect for us when really they have none.

Nothing more hateful, more despicable, than hypocrisy; he that blesteth his friend with a loud voice, it shall be counted a curse, when it appears his heart is not with him. God will not smell in their solemn assemblies, for there is nothing in them that is grateful to him; but a great deal that is offensive. Their sacrifices are not to him of a sweet smelling savour, as Noah's was, Gen. viii. 21. He will not accept them, he will not regard them, will not take any notice of them; he will not hear the melody of their viols, for when sin is a jar in the harmony it grates in his ears; take it away, saith God, I cannot hear it. Now this speaks, (1.) That sacrifice itself is of small account with God in comparison with moral duties; to love God and our neighbour, is better than all burnt-offering and sacrifice. (2.) That the sacrifice of the wicked is really an abomination to him, Prov. xv. 8. Dissembled piety is double iniquity, and so it will be found, when if any place in hell be hotter than another, that will be the hypocrite's portion.

2. What it was that he required in order to the acceptableness of their sacrifices, and without which no sacrifice would be acceptable, ver. 24. Let judgment run down as waters, among you, and righteousness as a mighty stream, i. e. (1.) Let there be a general reformation of manners among you: let religion, God's judgment, and righteousness, have its due influence upon you, let your land be watered with it, and let it bear down all the opposition of vice and profaneness: let it run wide as overflowing waters, and yet run strong as a mighty stream. (2.) In particular, let justice be duly administered by magistrates and rulers; let not the current of it be stopped by partiality and bribery, but let it come freely as waters do, in the natural course, let it be pure as running waters, not muddled with corruption, or whatever may pervert justice; let it run like a mighty stream, and not suffer itself to be obstructed, or its course retarded by the fear of man; let all have free access to it, as to a common stream, and have benefit by it, as trees planted by the rivers of waters. The great thing laid to Israel's charge, was turning judgment into wormwood, ver. 7. in that matter therefore they must reform, Zech. vii. 9. This was it that God desired more than sacrifice, Hos. vi. 6. 1 Sam. xv. 22.

3. What little stress God had laid upon the law of sacrifices, though it was his own law, in comparison with the moral precepts, ver. 25. Did ye offer unto me sacrifices in the wilderness forty years? No, you did not; for the greatest part of that time sacrifice was very much neglected, because of the unsettledness of their state: after the second year, the passover was not kept till they were come into Canaan, and other institutions were in like manner intermitted; and yet because God will have mercy, and not sacrifice, he never imputed the omission to them as their fault, but continued his care of them and kindness to them; that was not it, but their murmuring and unbelief, for which God was displeased with them. He that so owned his people, though they did not sacrifice, when in other things they kept close to him, will certainly disown them though they do sacrifice, if in other things they depart from him. But though ritual sacrifices may thus be dispensed with, spiritual sacrifices will not; even justice and honesty will not excuse for the want of prayer and praise, a broken heart, and the love of God. Stephen quotes this passage, Acts vii. 42. to shew the Jews that they ought not to think strange at the repeal of the ceremonial law, when from the beginning it was comparatively made light of. Compare Jer. vii. 22, 23.

4. What little reason they had to expect that their sacrifices should be acceptable to God, when they and their fathers had been all along addicted to the worship of other gods. So some take ver. 25. Did you offer to me sacrifices? i. e. to ME only? No, and therefore not at all to ME acceptably; for the law of worshipping the Lord our God is, That him only we



*must force. But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch, ver. 26.* little shrines that you made to carry about with you, pocket-idols for your private superstition, when you durst not be seen to do it publicly. You have had the images of your Moloch, your king, probably representing the sun, that sits king among the heavenly bodies, and *Chion*, or *Remphan*, as Stephen calls it, *Acts vii. 43.* after the LXX. which it is supposed represented Saturn, the highest of the seven planets: the worship of the sun, moon and stars, was the most ancient, most general, and most plausible idolatry; they made to themselves the star of their god, some particular star which they took to be their god, or the name of which they gave to their god. This idolatry Israel was from the beginning prone to, *Deut. iv. 19.* and those that retain an affection for false gods cannot expect the favour of the true God.

5. What punishment God would inflict upon them for their persisting in idolatry, *ver. 27. I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus.* They were led captive by Satan into idolatry, and therefore God caused them to go into captivity among idolaters, and hurried them into a strange land, who were so fond of strange gods. They were carried beyond Damascus: their captivity by the Assyrians was far beyond that by the Syrians; for if lesser judgments do not work that for which they were sent, God will send greater. Or the captivity of Israel under Salmanassa, was far beyond that of Damascus under Tiglath-peser, and much more grievous and destructive, which was foretold, *chap. i. 5.* for as the sins of God's professing people, are greater than the sins of others, so it may be expected, their punishments will be proportionable. We find the spoil of Damascus, and that of Samaria, carried off together by the king of Assyria, *Isa. viii. 4.* Stephen reads it, *I will carry you away beyond Babylon, Acts vii. 43.* further than Judah shall be carried, so far further as not to return. And to make this sentence appear both the more certain and the more dreadful, he that passeth it calls himself the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts; and who is therefore able to execute the sentence, having hosts at command.

## C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A sinful people studying to put a slight upon God's threatenings, and to make them appear trivial: confiding in their privileges and pre-eminences above other nations, *ver. 2, 3.* and their power, *ver. 13.* and wholly addicted to their pleasures, *ver. 3—6.* (2.) A serious prophet studying to put a weight upon God's threatenings, and to make them appear terrible, by setting forth the severity of those judgments that were coming upon those sensualists, *ver. 7.* God's abhorring them, and abandoning them and theirs to death, *ver. 8—11.* and bringing utter desolation upon them, since they would not be wrought upon by the methods he had taken for their conviction, *ver. 12—14.*

1. **W**OE to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came? 2. Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hemath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? 3. Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; 4. That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall. 5. That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; 6. That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. 7. ¶ Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

The first words of the chapter are the contents of these verses; but they sound very strange and contrary to the sentiments of a vain world, *Woe to them that are at ease*; we are ready to say, *Happy they that are at ease*, that neither feel any trouble nor fear any, that lie soft and warm, and lay nothing to heart; and *wife* we think are they that do so, that bathe themselves in the delights of sense, and care not how the world goes; these are looked upon as doing well for themselves that do well for their bodies and make much of them, but against them this *woe* is denounced, and we are here told what their ease is, and what the *woe* is.

1. Here is a description of their pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon with them.

1. They were vainly conceited of their own dignities, and thought those would secure them from the judgments threatened and be their defence against the wrath both of God and man. (1.) Those that dwell in Zion thought that was honour and protection enough for them, and they might there be quiet from all fear of evil, because it was a strong city, well fortified both by nature and art, we read of Zion's strong-holds and her bulwarks, and because it was a royal city, where were set the thrones of the house of David; it was the head city of Judah, and therefore truly great; and especially because it was the holy city, where the temple was, and the testimony of Israel; they that dwelt there doubted not but that God's sanctuary would be a sanctuary to them, and would shelter them from his judgments. The temple of the Lord are these, *Jer. vii. 4.* They are haughty because of the holy mountain, *Zeph. iii. 11.* Note, Many are puffed up with pride, and rocked asleep in carnal security by their church privileges, and the place they have in Zion, (2.) Those that dwell in the mountain of Samaria, though it was not a holy hill like that of Zion, yet they trusted in it because it was the metropolis of a potent kingdom, and perhaps in imitation of Jerusalem, was the head-quarters of its religion; and by tract of time the hill of Shemer became with them in as good repute as the hill of Zion ever was. They hoped for salvation from these hills and mountains. (3.) Both these two kingdoms valued themselves upon their relation to Israel, that prince with God, which they looked upon as making them the chief of the nations, more ancient and honourable than any of them. The first fruits of the nations, so the word is, dedicated to God, and sanctifying the whole harvest; the house of Israel came to them, i. e. was divided into those kingdoms, Zion and Samaria were the mother cities of. Those that were at ease, were the princes and rulers, the great men, that were chief of the nations, chief of those two kingdoms, and to whom, having their residence in Zion and Samaria, the whole house of Israel applied themselves for judgment. Note, It is hard to be great and not to be proud: great nations and great men are

apt to overvalue themselves, and to overlook their neighbours, because they think they a little overtop them.

But for a check to their pride and security, the prophet bids them take notice of these cities that were within the compass of their knowledge, that had been as illustrious in their time as ever Zion or Samaria were, and yet were destroyed, *ver. 2.* Go to Calneh; which was an ancient city built by Nimrod, *Gen. x. 10.* and see what is become of that, it is now in ruins, so is Hemath the great, one of the chief cities of Syria; Sennacherib boasts of destroying the gods of Hemath. Gath was likewise made desolate by Hazael, and not long ago, *2 Kings xii. 17.* Now were they better than these kingdoms of Judah and Israel? Yes, they were, and their border greater than your border, so that they had more reason than you to be confident of their own safety: yet you see what is become of them, and dare you be secure? Art thou better than populous, No? *Nah. iii. 8.* Note, The examples of others ruin forbids us to be secure.

2. They persisted in their wicked courses upon a presumption that they should never be called to an account for them, *ver. 3. Ye put far away the evil-day,* the day of reckoning as a thing that shall never come; or ye look upon it as at such a distance, that it makes no impression at all upon you, ye put it far away, and think you can still put it yet further, and adjourn it *de die in diem*, and therefore ye cause the seat of violence to draw near, i. e. ye venture upon all acts of injustice and oppression, and have fellowship with the throne of iniquity, which frameth mischief by a law, *Psal. xciv. 20.* ye cause that to come near, as if that would be your protection from these judgments which really ripens you for them. Note, Therefore men take sin to be near them, because they take judgments to be far off from them: but they deceive themselves who thus mock God.

3. They indulged themselves in all manner of sensual pleasures and delights, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* These Israelites were perfect epicures and slaves to their appetites: their dignities (in consideration of which they ought to have been examples of self-denial and mortification) they thought would justify them in their sensuality: the gains of their oppression and violence they thought would bear the charge of it; and they put the evil day at a distance, that that might give them no disturbance in it.

That which they are here charged with is not in itself sinful, these things might be soberly and moderately used, but they placed their happiness in the gratification of their carnal appetites: and though they were men in office, that had business to mind, they gave themselves up to their pleasures, spent their time in them, and threw away their thoughts, and cares, and estates upon them; they were in these enjoyments as in their element: their hearts were upon them, they exceeded all bounds in them, and this at a time when God in his providence was calling them to weeping and mourning, *Isa. xlii. 12, 13.* when they were under guilt and wrath, and the judgments of God were ready to break in upon them they called for wine and strong drink, presuming that to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant, *Isa. lvi. 11.* thus walking contrary to God, and setting his justice at defiance. (1.) They were extravagant in their furniture: nothing would serve them but beds of ivory to sleep upon, or to sit on: at their meat, when sick-cloth and ashes had better become them. (2.) They were lazy, and humoured themselves in the love of ease: they did not only lie down, but stretched themselves upon their couches, when they should have stirred up themselves to their business: they were willingly slothful, and took a pride in doing nothing; they abound in superfluities, (so the margin reads it) when many of their poor brethren wanted necessities. (3.) They were nice and curious in their diet, must have every thing of the best, and abundance of it: they eat the lambs out of the flock, (lambs by wholesale;) and the calves out of the midst of the stall, the fatter they could lay their hand on; and these perhaps not out of their own flock, and their own stall, but taken by oppression from the poor. (4.) They were merry and jovial, and diverted themselves at their feasts with music and singing: they chant to the sound of the viol, sing and play in concert, and they invent new-fashioned instruments of music, striving herein, more than in any thing else, to excel their ancestors; they set their wits on work to contrive how to please their fancy. Some men never shew their ingenuity but in their luxury; on that they bestow all their faculty of invention and contrivance. They invent instruments of music, like David: entertain themselves with that which formerly used to be the entertainment of kings only. Or it intimates their profaneness in their mirth, they mimicked the temple music, and made a jest of that, because it may be it was old-fashioned, and they took a pride in bantering it as the Babylonians did when they urged the captives to sing them the songs of Zion; such was Belsazzar's profaneness, when he drank wine in temple-bowls, and such theirs that sing vain and loose songs in psalm-tunes, on purpose to ridicule a divine institution. (5.) They drink to excess, and never think they can pour down enough: they drink wine in bowls, not in glasses or cups (as *Jer. xxxv. 5.*) they hate to be stinted, and must have large draughts, and therefore make use of vessels that they can steal a draught out of. (6.) They affect the strongest perfumes; they anoint themselves with the chief ointments, to please the smell, and to make them in love with their own bodies and to guard against those prefaces of putrefaction which they carry about with them while they live. No ordinary ointment would serve their turn, they must have the chief, such as were far-fetched and dear-bought, when cheaper would have served as well.

4. They had no concern at all for the interests of the church of God, and of the nation, that were sinking and going to decay; They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph; the church of God including both the kingdoms of Judah and Israel (which are called Joseph, *Psal. lxxx. 1.*) was in distress, invaded, insulted and broken in upon: their own kingdom which they were intrusted with the government of, the affairs of which they were the directors of, the peace of which they were the conservators of, great breaches were made upon it, upon its peace and welfare; and they were so besotted that they were not aware of them, so indulgent of their pleasures that they never laid them to heart, and had such an aversion to the thing called business, that they were in no care or concern to get them repaired. It is all one to them whether the nation sink or swim, so that they can but lie at ease and live in pleasure. Particular persons that belonged to Joseph were in affliction, and they took no cognizance of their case, of the wrongs and hardships they sustained, and the troubles they were in, nor took any care to relieve them and right them; contrary to the temper of holy Job, who when he was in prosperity, wept with him that was in misery, and his soul was grieved for the poor, *Job xxx. 25.* Some think in here calling the afflicted church Joseph there is an allusion to the story of Pharaoh's butler, who, when he was preferred to give the cup again into his master's hand, remembered not Joseph but forgot him, *Gen. xl. 21—23.* Thus these drank wine in bowls, but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Note, Those are commonly careless of other's troubles that are set upon their own pleasures; and it is a great offence to God when his church is in affliction and we are not grieved for it nor lay it to heart.

2. Here is the doom passed upon them, *ver. 7. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive,* and shall fall into all the miseries that attend captives; and the banquet of them that stretched themselves upon their couches



couches shall be removed. Their plenty shall be taken from them, and they from it, because they made it the food and fuel of their lusts. (1.) They that lived in luxury shall lose even their liberty; and by being brought into servitude, shall be justly punished for the abuse of their dignity and dominion. (2.) They that trusted in the delights and pleasures of their own land shall be carried away into a strange land, and so made ashamed of their pride and confidence; they shall go captive. (3.) They that placed their happiness in the pleasures of sense, and set their hearts upon them, shall be deprived of those pleasures, their banquet shall be removed, and they shall know what it is to fare hard. (4.) Those that stretched themselves shall be made to contract themselves, and to come into a less compass. (5.) Those that put the evil day far from them, shall find it nearer to them than it is to others; they shall go captive with the first, who flattered themselves with hopes that if trouble did come, they would be the last that should be seized by it. Those are ripening apace for trouble themselves that lay not to heart the troubles of others, and of the church of God. Those that give themselves to mirth when God calls them to mourning, will find it is a sin that shall not go unpunished, *Iju. xxii. 14.*

8. The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, faith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein. 9. And it shall come to pass, that if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. 10. And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, *Is there yet any with thee?* and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD. 11. For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts. 12. ¶ Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plough there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock: 13. Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? 14. But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation. O house of Israel, faith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath, unto the river of the wilderness.

In the former part of the chapter we had these secure Israelites loading themselves with pleasures as if they could never be made merry enough; here we have God loading them with punishments, as if they could never be made miserable enough. And observe,

(1.) How strongly this burden is bound on, not to be shaken off by their presumption and security; for it is bound by the Lord, the God of hosts, by his mighty, his almighty hand, which none can resist; it is bound with an oath, which puts the sentence past revocation, *The Lord God hath sworn, and he will not repent*, and since he could swear by no greater, he hath sworn by himself. How dreadful, how miserable is the case of those whose ruin, whose eternal ruin God himself hath sworn; who can execute his purpose, and cannot alter it!

(2.) How heavy this burden lies! let us see the particulars,

1. God will abhor and abandon them, and that speaks misery enough, all misery. *I abhor the excellency of Jacob*; all that which they are proud of, and value themselves upon, and for which they call and count themselves the chief of the nations. Their visible church-membership, and the privileges of that, their temple, altar and priesthood, these were more than any thing the excellencies of Jacob; but when these were profaned and polluted by sin God abhorred them, he hated and despised them, *chap. v. 21.* Note, God abhors that form of godliness which hypocrites keep up, while they abhor the power of it. And if he abhors their temple for the iniquity of that, no marvel that he hates their palaces for the injustice and oppression he finds there. Note, That creature which we take such a complacency, and put such a confidence in, as to make it a rival with God, is thereby made abominable to him. He hates the palaces of sinners for the sake of the wickedness of them which dwell therein, *Prov. iii. 33.* The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: And if God abhor them, presently it follows, He will deliver up the city with all that is therein, deliver it up into the hands of the enemy that will lay it waste, and make a prey of all its wealth. Note, Those that are abhorred and abandoned of God are undone to all intents and purposes.

2. There shall be a great and general mortality among them, *ver. 9.* If there remain ten men in one house that have escaped the sword of the enemy yet they shall be met with another way, they shall all die by famine or pestilence. In the most sickly times, if there be ten in a house, one may hope at least the one half of them will escape, according to the proportion of two in a bed, one taken and the other left; but here not one of ten shall live to bury the rest. Another instance of the greatness of the mortality is, *ver. 10.* that the nearest relations of the dead shall be forced with their own hands to wind up their bodies and bury them, for want of other hands to be employed in it: that is all that the next of kin, to whom the right of redemption belongs, can do for them, and with great reluctance will they do that. It intimates that the young people shall be cut off soonest; for the uncle that survives is ordinarily the senior relation: when the uncle comes with the sexton, or him that burneth, to bring out the bones out of the house, he shall say, to him that he sees next about the house, *Is there yet any with thee?* Are there any left alive? And he shall say, No, this is the last; now the whole family is cut off by death, and neither root nor branch remains. But that which makes this judgment the more grievous is, that their hearts seem to be hardened under it. When he that was found by the sides of the house began to enter into discourse with those that were carrying off the dead, they shall say, *Hold thy tongue*; do not stand preaching to us about the hand of Providence in this calamity, for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord. God is so angry with us that there is no speaking to him, he is so extreme to mark what we do amiss, that we dare not so much as make mention of his name. Thus the foolishness of men perverteth their way, and brings them into distress, and then their heart fretteth against the Lord: Even then they will not take notice of his hand, nor suffer those about them to do it.

Perhaps it was forbidden by some of the idolatrous kings to make mention

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(4.) How easily and effectually this burden shall be brought upon them, *ver. 14.* He that brings it upon them is the Lord the God of hosts, who both may do, and can do, what he pleaseth; who has all creatures at his command, and who, when he has work to do, will not want instruments to do it with; though they are the house of Israel, yet he will raise up against them a nation which they feared not, but had many a time hoped in, even the Assyrians, and this nation shall afflict them, bring them into straits, and put them to pain, from the entering in of Hemath, in the north to the river of the wilderness, the river of Egypt, Sihor or Nile in the south. The whole nation hath shared in the iniquity, and therefore must expect to share in the calamity. Note, When men are any way instruments of affliction to us, we must see God raising them up against us, for they are his hand, the rod, the sword in his hand. The Lord hath bidden Shimei curse David.

## CHAP. VII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) God contending with Israel, by the judgments brought on their land. (1.) They were threatened with lesser judgments, but are reprov'd, and the judgments raised away at the prayer of Amos, *ver. 1-6.* (2.) God's patience is at length worn out by their obstinacy, and they are rejected, and sentenced to utter ruin, *ver. 7-9.* (2.) Israel contending with God, by the opposition given to his prophet. (1.) Amariah informs against Amos, *ver. 10, 11.* and doth what he can to rid the country of him as a public nuisance, *ver. 12, 13.* (2.) Amos justifies himself in what he did as a prophet, *ver. 14, 15.* and denounceth the judgments of God against Amariah his prosecutor, *ver. 16, 17.* for when the contest is between God and man, it is easy to foresee, it is very easy to foretell, who will come off with the worst of it.

1. **T**HUS hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. 2. And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 3. The LORD repented for this: it shall not be, faith the LORD. 4. ¶ Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. 5. Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 6. The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, faith the Lord GOD. 7. Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the LORD stood upon a wall, made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. 8. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more: 9. And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of



*must force. But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch, ver. 26.* little shrines that you made to carry about with you, pocket-idols for your private superstition, when you durst not be seen to do it publicly. You have had the images of your Moloch, your king, probably representing the sun, that sits king among the heavenly bodies, and *Chim, or Remphan*, as Stephen calls it, *Acts vii. 43.* after the LXX. which it is supposed represented Saturn, the highest of the seven planets: the worship of the sun, moon and stars, was the most ancient, most general, and most plausible idolatry; they made to themselves the star of their god, some particular star which they took to be their god, or the name of which they gave to their god. This idolatry Israel was from the beginning prone to, *Deut. iv. 19.* and those that retain an affection for false gods cannot expect the favour of the true God.

5. What punishment God would inflict upon them for their persisting in idolatry, *ver. 27. I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus.* They were led captive by Satan into idolatry, and therefore God caused them to go into captivity among idolaters, and hurried them into a strange land, who were so fond of strange gods. They were carried beyond Damascus: their captivity by the Assyrians was far beyond that by the Syrians; for if lesser judgments do not work that for which they were sent, God will send greater. Or the captivity of Israel under Salmanassa, was far beyond that of Damascus under Tiglath-pelefer, and much more grievous and destructive, which was foretold, *chap. i. 5.* for as the sins of God's professing people, are greater than the sins of others, so it may be expected, their punishments will be proportionable. We find the spoil of Damascus, and that of Samaria, carried off together by the king of Assyria, *Isa. viii. 4.* Stephen reads it, *I will carry you away beyond Babylon, Acts vii. 43.* further than Judah shall be carried, so far further as not to return. And to make this sentence appear both the more certain and the more dreadful, he that passeth it calls himself the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts; and who is therefore able to execute the sentence, having hosts at command.

## C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A sinful people judging to put a slight upon God's threatenings, and to make them appear trivial: *confiding in their privileges and pre-eminences above other nations, ver. 2, 3. and their power, ver. 13. and wholly addicted to their pleasures, ver. 3—6.* (2.) A serious prophet studying to put a weight upon God's threatenings, and to make them appear terrible, by setting forth the severity of those judgments that were coming upon those sensualists, *ver. 7. God's abhorring them, and abandoning them and theirs to death, ver. 8—11. and bringing utter desolation upon them, since they would not be wrought upon by the methods he had taken for their conviction, ver. 12—14.*

1. **W**OE to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came? 2. Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hemath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? 3. Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; 4. That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall. 5. That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; 6. That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. 7. ¶ Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

The first words of the chapter are the contents of these verses; but they found very strange and contrary to the sentiments of a vain world, *Woe to them that are at ease*; and we are ready to say, *Happy they that are at ease*, that neither feel any trouble nor fear any, that lie soft and warm, and lay nothing to heart; and *wife we think are they that do so*, that bathe themselves in the delights of sense, and care not how the world goes; these are looked upon as doing well for themselves that do well for their bodies and make much of them, but against them this *woe is denounced*, and we are here told what their ease is, and what the *woe is*.

1. Here is a description of their pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon with them.

1. They were vainly conceited of their own dignities, and thought those would secure them from the judgments threatened and be their defence against the wrath both of God and man. (1.) Those that dwell in Zion thought that was honour and protection enough for them, and they might there be quiet from all fear of evil, because it was a strong city, well fortified both by nature and art, we read of Zion's strong-holds and her bulwarks, and because it was a royal city, where were set the thrones of the house of David; it was the head city of Judah, and therefore truly great; and especially because it was the holy city, where the temple was, and the testimony of Israel; they that dwell there doubted not but that God's sanctuary would be a sanctuary to them, and would shelter them from his judgments. *The temple of the Lord are these, Jer. vii. 4. They are haughty because of the holy mountain, Zeph. iii. 11.* Note, Many are puffed up with pride, and rocked asleep in carnal security by their church privileges, and the place they have in Zion, (2.) Those that dwell in the mountain of Samaria, though it was not a holy hill like that of Zion, yet they trusted in it because it was the metropolis of a potent kingdom, and perhaps in imitation of Jerusalem, was the head-quarters of its religion; and by tract of time the hill of Shemer became with them in as good repute as the hill of Zion ever was. They hoped for salvation from these hills and mountains. (3.) Both these two kingdoms valued themselves upon their relation to Israel, that prince with God, which they looked upon as making them the chief of the nations, more ancient and honourable than any of them. *The first fruits of the nations*, so the word is, dedicated to God, and sanctifying the whole harvest; the house of Israel came to them, i. e. was divided into those kingdoms, Zion and Samaria were the mother cities of. Those that were at ease, were the princes and rulers, the great men, that were chief of the nations, chief of those two kingdoms, and to whom, having their residence in Zion and Samaria, the whole house of Israel applied themselves for judgment. Note, It is hard to be great and not to be proud: great nations and great men are

apt to overvalue themselves, and to overlook their neighbours, because they think they a little overtop them.

But for a check to their pride and security, the prophet bids them take notice of these cities that were within the compass of their knowledge, that had been as illustrious in their time as ever Zion or Samaria were, and yet were destroyed, *ver. 2, 3. Go to Calneh*, which was an ancient city built by Nimrod, *Gen. x. 10.* and see what is become of that, it is now in ruins. So is Hemath the great, one of the chief cities of Syria; Sennacherib boasts of destroying the gods of Hemath. Gath was likewise made desolate by Hazael, and not long ago, *2 Kings xii. 17.* Now were they better than these kingdoms of Judah and Israel? Yes, they were, and their border greater than your border, so that they had more reason than you to be confident of their own safety: yet you see what is become of them, and dare you be secure? *Art thou better than populous, No? Nah. iii. 8.* Note, The examples of others ruin forbids us to be secure.

2. They persisted in their wicked courses upon a presumption that they should never be called to an account for them, *ver. 3. Ye put far away the evil-day*, the day of reckoning as a thing that shall never come; or ye look upon it as at such a distance, that it makes no impression at all upon you, ye put it far away, and think you can still put it yet further, and adjourn it *de die in diem*, and therefore ye cause the seat of violence to draw near, i. e. ye venture upon all acts of injustice and oppression, and have fellowship with the throne of iniquity, which frameth mischief by a law. Psalm xciv. 20. ye cause that to come near, as if that would be your protection from these judgments which really ripens you for them. Note, Therefore men take sin to be near them, because they take judgments to be far off from them: but they deceive themselves who thus mock God.

3. They indulged themselves in all manner of sensual pleasures and delights, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* These Israelites were perfect epicures and slaves to their appetites: their dignities (in consideration of which they ought to have been examples of self-denial and mortification) they thought would justify them in their sensuality: the gains of their oppression and violence they thought would bear the charge of it; and they put the evil day at a distance, that that might give them no disturbance in it.

That which they are here charged with is not in itself sinful, these things might be soberly and moderately used, but they placed their happiness in the gratification of their carnal appetites: and though they were men in office, that had business to mind, they gave themselves up to their pleasures, spent their time in them, and threw away their thoughts, and cares, and estates upon them; they were in these enjoyments as in their element: their hearts were upon them, they exceeded all bounds in them, and this at a time when God in his providence was calling them to weeping and mourning, *Isa. xlvii. 12, 13.* when they were under guilt and wrath, and the judgments of God were ready to break in upon them they called for wine and strong drink, presuming that to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant, *Isa. lvi. 11.* thus walking contrary to God, and setting his justice at defiance.

(1.) They were extravagant in their furniture: nothing would serve them but beds of ivory to sleep upon, or to sit on at their meat, when sackcloth and ashes had better become them. (2.) They were lazy, and humour-ed themselves in the love of ease: they did not only lie down, but stretched themselves upon their couches, when they should have stirred up themselves to their business: they were willingly slothful, and took a pride in doing nothing; they abounded in superfluities, (so the margin reads it) when many of their poor brethren wanted necessities. (3.) They were nice and curious in their diet, must have every thing of the best, and abundance of it: they eat the lambs out of the flock, (lambs by wholesale;) and the calves out of the midst of the stall, the fattest they could lay their hand on; and these perhaps not out of their own flock, and their own stall, but taken by oppression from the poor. (4.) They were merry and jovial, and diverted themselves at their feasts with music and singing: they chant to the sound of the viol, sing and play in concert, and they invent new-fashioned instruments of music, striving herein, more than in any thing else, to excel their ancestors; they set their wits on work to contrive how to please their fancy. Some men never shew their ingenuity but in their luxury; on that they bestow all their faculty of invention and contrivance. They invent instruments of music, like David: entertain themselves with that which formerly used to be the entertainment of kings only. Or it intimates their profaneness in their mirth, they mimicked the temple music, and made a jest of that, because it may be it was old-fashioned, and they took a pride in bantering it as the Babylonians did when they urged the captives to sing them the songs of Zion; such was Belshazzar's profaneness, when he drank wine in temple-bowls, and such theirs that sing vain and loose songs in psalm-tunes, on purpose to ridicule a divine institution. (5.) They drink to excess, and never think they can pour down enough: they drink wine in bowls, not in glasses or cups (as *Jer. xxxv. 5.*) they hate to be stinted, and must have large draughts, and therefore make use of vessels that they can steal a draught out of. (6.) They affect the strongest perfumes; they anoint themselves with the chief ointments, to please the smell, and to make them in love with their own bodies and to guard against those presages of putrefaction which they carry about with them while they live. No ordinary ointment would serve their turn, they must have the chief, such as were far-fetched and dear-bought, when cheaper would have served as well.

4. They had no concern at all for the interests of the church of God, and of the nation, that were sinking and going to decay; *They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*; the church of God including both the kingdoms of Judah and Israel (which are called Joseph, *Psalms lxxx. 1.*) was in distress, invaded, insulted and broken in upon: their own kingdom which they were intrusted with the government of, the affairs of which they were the directors of, the peace of which they were the conservators of, great breaches were made upon it, upon its peace and welfare; and they were so besotted that they were not aware of them, so indulgent of their pleasures that they never laid them to heart, and had such an aversion to the thing called business, that they were in no care or concern to get them repaired. It is all one to them whether the nation sink or swim, so that they can but lie at ease and live in pleasure. Particular persons that belonged to Joseph were in affliction, and they took no cognizance of their ease, of the wrongs and hardships they sustained, and the troubles they were in, nor took any care to relieve them and right them; contrary to the temper of holy Job, who when he was in prosperity, wept with him that was in misery, and his soul was grieved for the poor, *Job xxx. 25.* Some think in here calling the afflicted church Joseph there is an allusion to the story of Pharaoh's butler, who, when he was preferred to give the cup again into his master's hand, remembered not Joseph but forgot him, *Gen. xl. 21—23.* Thus these drank wine in bowls, but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Note, Those are commonly careless of other's troubles that are set upon their own pleasures; and it is a great offence to God when his church is in affliction and we are not grieved for it nor lay it to heart.

2. Here is the doom passed upon them, *ver. 7. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive*, and shall fall into all the miseries that attend captives; and the banquet of them that stretched themselves upon their couches



couches shall be removed. Their plenty shall be taken from them, and they from it, because they made it the food and fuel of their lusts. (1.) They that lived in luxury shall lose even their liberty; and by being brought into servitude, shall be justly punished for the abuse of their dignity and dominion. (2.) They that trusted in the delights and pleasures of their own land shall be carried away into a strange land, and so made ashamed of their pride and confidence; they shall go captive. (3.) They that placed their happiness in the pleasures of sense, and set their hearts upon them, shall be deprived of those pleasures, their banquet shall be removed, and they shall know what it is to fare hard. (4.) Those that stretched themselves shall be made to contract themselves, and to come into a less compass. (5.) Those that put the evil day far from them, shall find it nearer to them than it is to others; they shall go captive with the first, who flattered themselves with hopes that if trouble did come, they would be the last that should be seized by it. Those are ripening apace for trouble themselves that lay not to heart the troubles of others, and of the church of God. Those that give themselves to mirth when God calls them to mourning, will find it is a sin that shall not go unpunished, *Ija.* xxii. 14.

8. The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, faith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein. 9. And it shall come to pass, that if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. 10. And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, *Is there yet any with thee?* and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD. 11. For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts. 12. ¶ Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plough there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock: 13. Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? 14. But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation. O house of Israel, faith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath, unto the river of the wilderness.

In the former part of the chapter we had these secure Israelites loading themselves with pleasures as if they could never be made merry enough; here we have God loading them with punishments, as if they could never be made miserable enough. And observe,

(1.) How strongly this burden is bound on, not to be shaken off by their presumption and security; for it is bound by the Lord, the God of hosts, by his mighty, his almighty hand, which none can resist; it is bound with an oath, which puts the sentence past revocation, *The Lord God hath sworn, and he will not repent*, and since he could swear by no greater, he hath sworn by himself. How dreadful, how miserable is the case of those whose ruin, whose eternal ruin God himself hath sworn; who can execute his purpose, and cannot alter it!

(2.) How heavy this burden lies! let us see the particulars,

1. God will abhor and abandon them, and that speaks misery enough, all misery. *I abhor the excellency of Jacob*; all that which they are proud of, and value themselves upon, and for which they call and count themselves the chief of the nations. Their visible church-membership, and the privileges of that, their temple, altar and priesthood, these were more than any thing the excellencies of Jacob; but when these were profaned and polluted by sin God abhorred them, he hated and despised them, *chap. v. 21.* Note, God abhors that form of godliness which hypocrites keep up, while they abhor the power of it. And if he abhors their temple for the iniquity of that, no marvel that he hates their palaces for the injustice and oppression he finds there. Note, That creature which we take such a complacency, and put such a confidence in, as to make it a rival with God, is thereby made abominable to him. He hates the palaces of sinners for the sake of the wickedness of them which dwell therein, *Prov. iii. 33.* The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: And if God abhor them, presently it follows, He will deliver up the city with all that is therein, deliver it up into the hands of the enemy that will lay it waste, and make a prey of all its wealth. Note, Those that are abhorred and abandoned of God are undone to all intents and purposes.

2. There shall be a great and general mortality among them, *ver. 9.* If there remain ten men in one house that have escaped the sword of the enemy yet they shall be met with another way, they shall all die by famine or pestilence. In the most sickly times, if there be ten in a house, one may hope at least the one half of them will escape, according to the proportion of two in a bed, one taken and the other left; but here not one of ten shall live to bury the rest. Another instance of the greatness of the mortality is, *ver. 10.* that the nearest relations of the dead shall be forced with their own hands to wind up their bodies and bury them, for want of other hands to be employed in it: that is all that the next of kin, to whom the right of redemption belongs, can do for them, and with great reluctance will they do that. It intimates that the young people shall be cut off soonest; for the uncle that survives is ordinarily the senior relation: when the uncle comes with the sexton, or him that burneth, to bring out the bones out of the house, he shall say, to him that he sees next about the house, *Is there yet any with thee?* Are there any left alive? And he shall say, No, this is the last; now the whole family is cut off by death, and neither root nor branch remains. But that which makes this judgment the more grievous is, that their hearts seem to be hardened under it. When he that was found by the sides of the house began to enter into discourse with those that were carrying off the dead, they shall say, *Hold thy tongue*; do not stand preaching to us about the hand of Providence in this calamity, for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord; God is so angry with us that there is no speaking to him, he is so extreme to mark what we do amiss, that we dare not so much as make mention of his name. Thus the foolishness of men perverteth their way, and brings them into distress, and then their heart fretteth against the Lord: Even then they will not take notice of his hand, nor suffer those about them to do it.

Perhaps it was forbidden by some of the idolatrous kings to make mention

of the name of Jehovah, as by the law of Moses it was forbidden to make mention of the names of the heathen-gods; we may not do it without incurring the penalty. Note, Those hearts are wretchedly hardened indeed that will not be brought to make mention of God's name, and to worship him, when the hand of God is gone out against them, and when, as here, sickness and death are in their families: Thus those heap up wrath, who cry not when God binds them.

3. Their houses shall be destroyed, *ver. 11.* God will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts, they shall both be cracked so as to lose their beauty and strength, and to be hastening towards a fall. The princes palaces are not above the rebukes of divine justice, nor the poor men's cottages beneath it; neither shall escape when sin has marked them for ruin, God will find ways to bring it about. It is by order from him that breaches are made.

(3.) How justly they are thus burdened; if we understand the matter aright, we will say, the Lord is righteous.

1. The methods used for their reformation had been all fruitless and ineffectual, *ver. 12.* Shall horses run upon the rock? to hurl or harrow the group there? Or will one plough there with oxen? No, for there will be no profit to countervail the pains; God had sent them his profits to break up their fallow ground, but they found them as hard and inflexible as the rock, rough and rugged, and they could do no good with them, nor work upon them, and therefore they shall not attempt it any more: They will not be reclaimed, and therefore shall not be reproved, but quite abandoned. Note, Those who will not be husbanded as fields and vineyards, shall be rejected as barren rocks and deserts, *Heb. vi. 7, 8.*

2. They had abused their power to the wrong and oppression of many, whose injured cause the sovereign Judge would not only right but revenge. *Ye have turned judgment into gall*, which is nauseous; and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock, which is noxious; it would make one sick to see how those that were intrusted with the administration of public justice, bear down equity with that power with which they ought to have defended and supported it, and so turned its own artillery against itself. Note, When our services of God are soured with sin, his providences will justly be embittered to us.

3. They had set the judgments of God at defiance, and confiding in their own strength thought themselves a match for omnipotence, *ver. 13.* They rejoiced in a thing of nought, pleased themselves with a fancy that no evil should befall them, though they had no ground at all for that confidence, nothing to trust to that would bear any weight. They said, *Have we not taken to us horns*, are we not arrived to great dignity and dominion, have we not pushed down our enemies, and pushed on our victories, and this by our own strength, our own conduct and courage, our own wealth and military force, who then need we be afraid of? Who then need we make court to? Not God himself. Note, Prosperity and success commonly make men secure and haughty; and those that have done much think they can do any thing, any thing without God, may, any thing against him: But those who trust in their own strength rejoice in a thing of nought, and so they will find. Probably they did not say this with their lips, *totidem verbis*, but it was the language of their hearts, and of their actions, both which God understands.

(1.) How easily and effectually this burden shall be brought upon them, *ver. 14.* He that brings it upon them is the Lord the God of hosts, who both may do, and can do, what he pleaseth; who has all creatures at his command, and who, when he has work to do, will not want instruments to do it with; though they are the house of Israel, yet he will raise up against them a nation which they feared not, but had many a time hoped in, even the Assyrians, and this nation shall afflict them, bring them into straits, and put them to pain, from the entering in of Hemath, in the north to the river of the wilderness, the river of Egypt, Sihor or Nile in the south. The whole nation hath shared in the iniquity, and therefore must expect to share in the calamity. Note, When men are any way instruments of affliction to us, we must see God raising them up against us, for they are his hand, the rod, the sword in his hand. The Lord hath bidden Shimei curse David.

## CHAP. VII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) God contending with Israel, by the judgments brought on their land. (1.) They were sentenced with lesser judgments, but are reprieved, and the judgments are deferred at the prayer of Amos, *ver. 1-6.* (2.) God's patience is at length worn out by their obstinacy, and they are rejected, and sentenced to utter ruin, *ver. 7-9.* (2.) Israel contending with God, by the opposition given to his prophet. (1.) Amaziah informs against Amos, *ver. 10, 11.* and doth what he can to rid the country of him as a public nuisance, *ver. 12, 13.* (2.) Amos justifies himself in what he did as a prophet, *ver. 14, 15.* and denounceth the judgments of God against Amaziah his prosecutor, *ver. 16, 17.* for when the contest is between God and man, it is easy to foresee, it is very easy to foretell, who will come off with the worst of it.

1. **T**HUS hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. 2. And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 3. The LORD repented for this: it shall not be, faith the LORD. 4. ¶ Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. 5. Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 6. The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, faith the Lord GOD. 7. Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the LORD stood upon a wall, made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. 8. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more: 9. And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of



of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

We here see that God bears long, but he will not bear always with a provoking people; both these God here *showed* the prophet; *Thus hath the Lord God showed me*, ver. 1. and again, ver. 4. and *thus he showed me*, ver. 7. he showed him what was present, foreshowed him what was to come, gave him the knowledge both of what he did, and of what he designed; for the Lord God revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets, chap. iii. 7.

1. We have here two instances of God's sparing mercy, remembered in the midst of judgment, the narratives of which are so like one another that they will be best considered together, and very considerable they are.

1. God is here coming forth against this sinful nation, first by one judgment, and then by another.

1. He begins with the judgment of *famine*; the prophet saw this in vision: He saw God forming grasshoppers or locusts, and bringing them up upon the land to eat up the fruits of it, and so to strip it of its beauty, and starve its inhabitants, ver. 1. God formed these grasshoppers, not only as they were his creatures, and much of the wisdom and power of God appears in the formation of minute animals, as much in the structure of an ant as of an elephant; but as they were instruments of his wrath, God is said to frame evil against a sinful people, Jer. xviii. 11. These grasshoppers were framed on purpose to eat up the *grafs of the land*: and vast numbers of them were prepared accordingly. They were sent in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth, after the king's mowings. See here how the judgment was mitigated by the mercy that went before it; God could have sent these insects to eat up the grafs at the beginning of the first growth, in the spring, when the grafs was most needed, was most plentiful, and was the best in its kind; but God suffered that to grow, and suffered them to gather it in, the king's mowings were safely housed, for the king himself is served from the field, Ecclef. v. 9. and could as ill be without his mowings, as without any other branch of his revenues; Uzziah was now king of Judah, who loved husbandry, 2 Chron. xxvi. 10. But the grasshoppers were commissioned to eat up only the *latter growth*, the edgrew, (we call it in the country) the after-grafs, which is of little value in comparison with the former.

The mercies which God gives us, and continues to us are more and more valuable than those he removes from us; which is a good reason why we should be thankful, and not complain. The remembrance of the mercies of the former growth should make us submissive to the will of God, when we meet with disappointments in the latter growth. The prophet in vision saw this judgment prevailing far. These grasshoppers eat up the grafs of the land which should have been for the cattle; which the owners must of course suffer by. Some understand this figuratively, of a wasting, destroying army brought upon them. In the days of Jeroboam, the kingdom of Israel began to recover itself from the desolations it had been under in the former reigns, 2 Kings xiv. 25. the latter growth shut up, after the mowings of the kings of Syria, which we read of 2 Kings xiii. 3. And then God commissioned the king of Assyria, with an army of caterpillars to come upon them and lay them waste; that nation spoken of, chap. vi. 14. which afflicted them from the entering of Hamath, to the river of the wilderness, which seems to refer to 2 Kings xiv. 25. where Jeroboam is said to have restored their coast from the entering of Hamath to the sea of the plain. God can then bring all to ruin, when we think all is in some good measure repaired.

2. He proceeds to the judgment of *fire*, to shew that he has many arrows in his quiver, many ways of humbling a sinful nation, ver. 4. The Lord God called to contend by fire. He contended; for God's judgments upon a people, are his controversies with them; in them he prosecutes his action against them; and his controversies are neither causeless nor groundless. He called to contend, he did by his prophets give them notice of his controversy, and drew up a declaration, setting forth the meaning of it. Or he called for his angels, or other ministers of his justice that were to be employed in it. A fire was kindled among them; by which is meant, either a great drought: the heat of the sun which should have warned the earth, scorched it, and burnt up the roots of the grafs which the locusts had eaten the spires of. Or a raging fever, which was as a fire in their bones, which devoured and eat up multitudes: Or lightning, fire from heaven, which consumed their houses, as Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed, chap. iv. 11. Or it was the burning of their cities, either by accident, or by the hand of the enemy, for fire and sword used to go together; thus were the towns wasted; as the country was by the grasshoppers. This fire which God called for did terrible execution, it devoured the great deep, as the fire that fell from heaven on Elijah's altar licked up the water that was in the trench. Though the water designed for the stopping and quenching of this fire were as the waters of the great deep, yet it devoured it; for who or what can stand before a fire kindled by the wrath of God? It did eat up a part, a great part of the cities where it was sent; or it was as the fire at Taberah, which consumed the outermost parts of the camp, Num. xi. 1. when some were overthrown, others were as brands plucked out of the fire. All deserved to be devoured, but it eat up only a part, for God doth not stir up all his wrath.

2. The prophet goes forth to meet him in the way of his judgments, and by prayer seeks to turn away his wrath, ver. 2. When he saw in vision what dreadful work these caterpillars made, that they had eaten up in a manner all the grafs of the land, he foresaw they would do so, if suffered to go on: Then he said, O Lord God, forgive I beseech thee, ver. 2. cease I beseech thee, ver. 5. He that foretold the judgment in his preaching to his people yet deprecated it in his intercessions for them. He is a prophet and he shall pray for thee; it was the business of prophets to pray for those whom they prophesied to, and so to make it appear, that though they denounced, they did not desire the woeful day. Therefore God shewed his prophets the evils coming, that they might befriend the people, not only by warning them, but by praying for them, and standing in the gap, to turn away God's wrath, as Moses that great prophet often did. Now observe here,

(1.) The prophet's prayer, O Lord God, (1.) Forgive I beseech thee, and take away the sin, ver. 2. He sees sin at the bottom of the trouble, and therefore concludes that the pardon of sin must be at the bottom of the deliverance, and prays for that in the first place. Note, Whatever calamity we are under, personal or public, the forgiveness of sin is that which we should be most earnest with God for. (2.) Cease I beseech thee, and take away the judgment; cease, the fire, cease the controversy; cease thine anger towards us to cease. This follows upon the forgiveness of sin. Take away the cause and the effect will cease. Note, Those whom God contends with will soon find what need they have to cry for a cessation of arms, and there are hopes that though God has begun and proceeded far in his controversy, yet it may be obtained.

(2.) The prophet's plea to enforce this prayer; by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? ver. 2, and it is repeated ver. 5. and yet no vain repetition. Christ in his agony prayed earnestly, saying the same words,

again and again. (1.) It is Jacob that he is interceding for: the professing people of God, called by his name, calling on his name, the seed of Jacob his chosen, and in covenant with him. It is Jacob's case that is in this prayer spread before the God of Jacob. (2.) Jacob is small, very small, already weakened and brought low by former judgments, and therefore if these come he will be quite ruined and brought to nothing. The people are few, the dust of Jacob is now soon counted, which when time was, was innumerable: These few are feeble; it is the worm Jacob, Isa. xli. 14. they are unable to help themselves or one another. Sin will soon make a great people small; will diminish the numerous, impoverish the plentiful, and weaken the courageous. (3.) By whom shall he arise? He is fallen and cannot help himself up, and he has no friend to help him, none to raise him unless the hand of God do it; what will become of him then, if the hand that should raise him be stretched out against him? Note, When the state of God's church is very low and very helpless, it is proper to be recommended by our prayers to God's pity.

3. God graciously lets fall his controversy in answer to the prophet's prayer, once and again, ver. 3. The Lord repented for this; he did not change his mind, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? but he changed his way, took another course, and determined to deal in mercy and not in wrath. He said, It shall not be: And again, ver. 6. This also shall not be. The caterpillars were countermanded, were remanded, a stop put to the progress of the fire, and thus a reprieve was granted. See the power of prayer, of effectual fervent prayer, how much it avails, what great things it prevails for. A stop has many a time been put to a judgment by making supplication to the judge. This was not the first time that Israel's life was begged and so saved. See what a blessing praying people, praying prophets, are to a land, and therefore how highly they ought to be valued. Ruin had many a time broken in, if they had not stood in the breach, and made good the pass. See how ready, how swift God is to shew mercy, how he waits to be gracious; Amos moves for a reprieve, and obtains it, because God inclines to grant it, and looks about to see, if there be any that will intercede for it, Isa. lvi. 16. Nor are former reprieves objected against further instances of mercy, but are rather encouragements to pray and hope for them. This also shall not be no more than that. It is the glory of God, that he multiplies to pardon, that he spares and forgives to more than seventy times seven times.

2. We have here the rejection of those at last, who had been often reprieved, and yet never reclaimed, reduced to straits, and yet never reduced to their God and their duty. This is represented to the prophet by a vision, ver. 7. 8. and an express prediction of utter ruin, ver. 9.

1. The vision is of a plumb-line, a line with a plummet at the end of it, such as masons and bricklayers use, to run up a wall by, that they may work it straight and true, and by rule. (1.) Israel was a wall, a strong wall, which God himself had reared, as a bulwark or wall of defence to his sanctuary, which he set up among them. The Jewish church saith of herself, Cant. viii. 10. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers. This wall was made by a plumb-line, very exact and firm. So happy was its constitution, so well compact, and every thing so well ordered according to the model; it had long stood fast as a wall of brass; but (2.) God now stands upon this wall, not to hold it up, but to tread it down; or rather to consider what he shall do with it: he stands upon it with a plumb-line in his hand to take measure of it, that it may appear to be a bowing, bulging wall, rectum est index sui & obliqui, this plumb-line would discover where it was crooked: Thus God would bring the people of Israel to the trial, would discover their wickedness and shew wherein they erred; and he would likewise bring his judgments upon them according to equity, would set a plumb-line in the midst of them; to mark how far their wall must be pulled down; as David measured the Moabites with a line, 2 Sam. viii. 2. to put them to death: And when God is coming to the ruin of a people, he is said to lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; for when he punisheth it is with exactness. It is now determined, I will not again pass by them any more; they shall not be spared and reprieved as they have been; their punishment shall not be turned away, chap. i. 3. Note, God's patience that has long been sinned against, will at length be sinned away; and the time will come when those that have been spared often shall be no longer spared. My Spirit shall not always strive. After frequent reprieves, yet a day of execution will come.

2. The prediction is of utter ruin, ver. 9. (1.) The body of the people shall be destroyed, with all those things that were their ornament and defence. They are here called Isaac as well as Israel; the house of Isaac, ver. 16. Some think in allusion to the signification of Isaac's name, it is laughter; they shall become a jest among all their neighbours; they shall laugh at them. The desolation shall fasten upon their high places, and their sanctuaries; either their castles or their temples, both built on high places; these shall be laid waste, to punish them for their idolatry, and to make them ashamed of their carnal confidences, which were the two things for which God had a controversy with them. When they were made desolate, they might read their sin and folly in their punishment. (2.) The royal family shall sink first, as an earnest of the ruin of the whole kingdom, I will raise against the house of Jeroboam, Jeroboam the second, who was now king of the ten tribes; his family was extirpated in his son Zecharias, that was slain with the sword before the people, by Shallum who conspired against him, 2 Kings xv. 10. How unrighteous soever the instruments were, God was righteous, and in them God rose up against that idolatrous family. Even king's houses will be no shelter against the sword of God's wrath.

10. ¶ Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos, hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel, the land is not able to bear all his words. 11. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. 12. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: 13. But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court. 14. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: 15. And the LORD took me as I followed the flock; and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. 16. ¶ Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the



the house of Isaac. 17. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

One would have expected that what we meet with in the former part of the chapter should. (1.) Have awakened the people to repentance, when they saw that therefore they were *reproved*, that they might have *space to repent*, and that they could not obtain a pardon unless they did repent. (2.) That it should have endeared the prophet Amos to them: who had not only shewed his good-will to them in praying against the judgments that *incurred* them, but had prevailed to *turn away* those judgments; which, if they had had any sense of gratitude, would have gained him an interest in their affections; but it fell out quite contrary; they continue impenitent, and the next news we hear of Amos is, he is persecuted. Note, As it is the praise of great saints that they pray for those who are enemies to them, so it is the shame of many great sinners that they are enemies to those who pray for them; *Psal. xxxv. 13—15.*—cix. 4. We have here,

1. The malicious information brought to the king against the prophet Amos, *ver. 10, 11.* The informer was Amaziah the *priest of Beth-el*, the chief of the priests that ministered to the golden calf there, the *president* of Bethel, so some read it, that had the principal hand in civil affairs there. He complained against Amos, not only because he prophesied without licence from him, but because he prophesied against his altars, which would soon be deserted and demolished if Amos's preaching could but have gained credit: Thus the *strife-makers* at Ephesus hated Paul, because his preaching tended to spoil their trade. Note, Great *pretenders* to sanctity are commonly the worst enemies to those who are really sanctified. Priests have been the most bitter persecutors. Amaziah brings an information to Jeroboam against Amos: Observe,

(1.) The crime he is charged with is no less than *treason*; Amos hath conspired against thee to depose and murder thee, he aims at succeeding thee, and therefore is taking the most effectual way to weaken thee. He sows the seeds of sedition in the hearts of the good subjects of the king and makes them disaffected to him and his government, that he may draw them by degrees from their allegiance; upon this account the land is not able to bear his words; it is sily insinuated to the king that the country was exasperated against him, and it is given in as *their* sense, that his preaching was intolerable, and such as no body could be reconciled to, such as the *times* would by no means bear, that is, the *men of the times* would not. Both the *impudence* of his supposed treason and the *ill influence* it would have upon the country, are intimated in that part of the charge, that he conspired against the king in the midst of the house of Israel. Note, It is no new thing for the accusers of the brethren to misrepresent them as enemies to the king and kingdom, as traitors to their prince, and troublers of the land, when really they are the best friends to both. And it is common for designing men to assert that as the sense of the country, which is far from being so. And yet here, I doubt it was too true, that the *people* could not bear plain dealing no more than the *priests*.

(2.) The words laid in the indictment for the support of this charge, *ver. 11.* Amos *saith*, and they have witnesses ready to prove it. Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be led away captive: and from hence they infer that he is an enemy to his king and country, and not to be tolerated. See the malice of Amaziah, he doth not tell the king how Amos had interceded for Israel, and by his intercession had turned away first one judgment and then another, and did not let fall his intercession till he saw the decree was gone forth: He doth not tell him that these threatenings were conditional, and he had often assured them, that if they would repent and reform the ruin should be prevented. Nay, it was not true that he said Jeroboam shall die by the sword, nor did he so die, *2 Kings xiv. 28.* but that God would rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword, *ver. 9.* God's prophets and ministers have often had occasion to make David's complaint, *Psal. lvi. 5.* Every day they wrest my words. But shall it be made the watchman's crime when he sees the sword coming to give warning to the people, that they may get themselves secured? Or the physician's crime to tell his patient of the danger of his disease, that he may use means for the cure of it? What enemies are foolish men to themselves, to their own peace, to their best friends! It doth not appear that Jeroboam took any notice of this information; perhaps he revered a prophet, and stood more in awe of the divine authority than Amaziah his priest did.

2. The method he used to persuade Amos to withdraw and quit the country, *ver. 12, 13.* when he could not gain his point with the king to have Amos imprisoned, banished or put to death, or at least to have him frightened into silence or flight, he tried what he could do by fair means to get rid of him; insinuated himself into his acquaintance, and with all the arts of wheedling endeavoured to persuade him to go *prophecy* in the land of Judah, and not at Bethel. He owns him to be a *seer*, and doth not pretend to enjoin him silence, but suggests to him, (1.) That Bethel was not a proper place for him to exercise his ministry in, for it was the king's chapel or sanctuary where he had his idols, and their altars and priests: and it was the king's court, or the house of the kingdom, where the royal family resided and where were set the thrones of judgment, and therefore *prophecy not any more* here. And why not? (1.) Because Amos is too plain and blunt a preacher for the court and the king's chapel; They that wear silk and fine clothing, and speak silken soft words are fit for king's palaces. (2.) Because the worship that is in the king's chapel will be a continual vexation and trouble to Amos, let him therefore get far enough from it, and what the eye sees not the heart grieves not for. (3.) Because it was not fit that the king and his house should be affronted in their own court and chapel, by the reproofs and threatenings which Amos was continually teasing them with in the name of the Lord; as if it were the prerogative of the prince, and the privilege of the peers, when they were running headlong upon a precipice not to be told of their danger. (4.) Because he could not expect any countenance or encouragement there, but on the contrary to be bantered and ridiculed by some, and to be threatened and brow-beaten by others; however, he could not think to make any converts there, or to persuade any from that idolatry, which was supported by the authority and example of the king. To preach his doctrine there, was but (as we say) to run his head against a post, and therefore *prophecy no more* there. But, (2.) He persuades him that the land of Judah was the fittest place for him to set up in; flee thee away thither with all speed, and there eat bread, and prophecy there; there thou wilt be safe, there thou wilt be welcome, the king's court and chapel there are on thy side; the prophets there will second thee, the priests and princes there will take notice of thee, and allow thee an honourable maintenance. See here, (1.) How willing wicked men are to get clear of their faithful reprovers, and how ready to say to the seers, see not, or see not for us; the two witnesses were a torment to them that dwelt on the earth, *Rev. xi. 10.* and it were indeed pity that men should be tormented before their time, but

that it is in order to the preventing of eternal torment. (2.) How apt worldly men are to measure others by themselves; Amaziah, as a *priest* aimed at nothing but the profits of his place, and he thought Amos, as a *prophet*, had the same views, and therefore *advised* him to *prophecy* there where he might eat bread, where he might be sure to have his belly full; whereas Amos was to *prophecy* where God appointed him, and where there was most need of him, not where he would get most money. Note, Those that make gain their godliness, and are governed by the hopes of wealth and preferment themselves, are ready to think theirs the most powerful inducements with others also.

3. The reply which Amos made to these suggestions of Amaziah; he did not consult with flesh and blood, nor was it his care to enrich himself but to make full proof of his ministry, and to be found faithful in the discharge of it: not to sleep in a whole skin, but to keep a good conscience, and therefore he resolves to abide by his post, and in answer to Amaziah,

1. He justifies himself in his constant adherence to his work, and to his place, *ver. 14, 15.* and that which he is sure will not only bear him out but bind him to it is, that he had a divine warrant and commission for it, I was no prophet or prophet's son, neither born or bred to the office, not originally designed for a prophet, as Samuel and Jeremiah; not educated in the schools of the prophets, as many others were; but I was a herdsman, a keeper of cattle; and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; our sycamores bear no fruit, but it seems theirs did, which Amos gathered either for his cattle, or for himself and his family, or to sell: he was a plain country-man, bred up and employed in country-work, and used to country-fare. He followed the flocks as well as the herds, and thence God took him and bid him go *prophecy* to his people Israel. deliver to them such messages as he should from time to time receive from the Lord. God made him a prophet, and a prophet to them; appointed him his work, and appointed him his post. Therefore he ought not to be silenced, for (1.) He could produce a divine commission for what he did; he did not run before he was sent, but pleads as Paul, that he was called to be an apostle, and men will find it at their peril if they contradict and oppose any that come in God's name; if they say to his seers, see not, or silence those whom he has bid speak, such fight against God. An affront done to an ambassador is an affront to the prince that sends him. Those that have a warrant from God ought not to fear the face of man. (2.) The mean character he wrote before he received that commission strengthened his warrant, so far was it from weakening it. (1.) He had no thoughts at all for ever being a prophet, and therefore his prophesying could not be imputed to a raised expectation, or a heated imagination, but purely to a divine impulse. (2.) He was not educated or instructed in the art or mystery of prophesying, and therefore he must have his abilities for it immediately from God, which is an undeniable proof that he had his mission from him. The apostles being originally unlearned and ignorant men, evidenced that they owed their knowledge to their having been with Jesus, *Acts iv. 13.* when the treasure is put into such earthen vessels it is thereby made to appear that the excellency of the power is of God and not of man. *2 Cor. iv. 7.* (3.) He had an honest calling, by which he could comfortably maintain himself and his family, and therefore did not need to prophesy for bread, as Amaziah suggested, *ver. 12.* did not take it up as a trade to live by, but as a trust to honour God and do good with. (4.) He had all his days been accustomed to a plain homely way of living among poor husbandmen, and never affected either gaieties or dainties, and therefore would not have thrust himself to near the king's court and chapel, if the business God had called him to had not called him thither. (5.) Having been so mealy bred he could not have had courage to speak to kings and great men, especially to speak such bold and provoking things to them, if he had not been animated by a greater spirit than his own. If God that sent him had not strengthened him he could not thus have set his face as a flint, *Isa. l. 7.* Note, God often chooseth the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty; and a herdsman of Tekoa puts to shame a priest of Bethel, when he receives from God authority and ability to act for him.

2. He condemns Amaziah for the opposition he gave him, and denounceth the judgments of God against him; not from any private resentment or revenge; but in the name of the Lord, and by authority from him, *ver. 16, 17.* Amaziah would not suffer Amos to preach at all, and therefore he is particularly ordered to preach against him; now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord, hear it and tremble. Those that cannot bear general woes, may expect woes of their own. The sin he is charged with is forbidding Amos to prophesy; we do not find that he beat him, or put him in the stocks, only he enjoined him silence, *Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac*; he must not only not thunder against them, but he must not so much as drop a word against them; he cannot bear, no, not the most gentle disfilling of that rain, that small rain. Let him therefore hear his doom.

1. For the opposition he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon himself and his family. This was the sin that filled the measure of his iniquity: (1.) He shall have no comfort in any of his relations, but be afflicted in those that were nearest to him. His wife shall be a harlot, either she shall be forcibly abused by the soldiers, as the Levite's concubine by the men of Gibeah, they ravished the women in Zion, *Lam. v. 11.* or she shall herself wickedly play the harlot, which though herself, her great sin, would be his affliction, his great affliction and reproach, and a just punishment upon him for promoting spiritual whoredom. Sometimes the sins of our relations are to be looked upon as the judgments of God upon us. His children, though they keep honest, yet shall not keep alive: his sons and his daughters shall fall by the sword of war, and he himself shall live to see it. He had trained them up in iniquity, and therefore God will cut them off in it. (2.) He shall be stripped of all his estate, it shall fall into the hand of the enemy, and be divided by line, by lot among the soldiers. What is ill got will not be long kept. (3.) He shall himself perish in a strange country; not in the land of Israel, which had been holiness to the Lord, but in a polluted land, in a heathen country, the fittest place for such a heathen to end his days in, that hated and silenced God's prophets, and contributed so much to the polluting of his own land with idolatry.

2. Notwithstanding the opposition he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon the land and nation; he was accused for saying, *Israel shall be led away captive*, *ver. 11.* but he stands to it, and repeats it; for the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of none effect; the burden of the word of the Lord may be striven with, but it cannot be shaken off; let Amaziah rage and fret, and say what he will to the contrary, *Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.* Note, It is to no purpose to contend with the judgments of God, for when God judgeth he will overcome. Stopping the mouths of God's ministers will not stop the progress of God's word, for it shall not return void.

## C H A P. VIII.

Sinful times are here attended with sorrowful times, so necessary is the connection between them; it is threatened here again and again that



the laughter shall be turned into mourning. (1.) By the vision of a basket of summer fruit is signified the hastening on of the ruin threatened, ver. 1—3. and that shall change their note. (2.) Oppressors are here called to an account for their abusing of the poor, and their destruction is foretold, which will set them on mourning, ver. 4—10. (3.) A famine of the word of God is here made the punishment of a people that go a-whoring after other gods, ver. 11—14. yet for this, which is the most mournful judgment of all, they are not here brought in mourning.

1. **T**HUS hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me : and behold a basket of summer fruit. 2. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel: I will not again pass by them any more. 3. And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, faith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

The great reason why sinners defer their repentance *de die in diem* is, because they think God thus defers his judgments, and there is no song wherewith they so effectually sing themselves asleep as that, *My Lord delays his coming*; and therefore God, by his prophets, frequently represents to Israel the day of his wrath not only as just and certain, but as very near and hastening on apace; so he doth in these verses.

1. The approach of the threatened ruin is represented by a basket of summer-fruit, which Amos saw in vision; for the Lord shewed it him, ver. 1. and obliged him to take notice of it, ver. 2. Amos, what seest thou? Note, It concerns us to inquire, whether we do indeed see that which God has been pleased to shew us, and hear what he has been pleased to say to us; for many a thing God speaks, God shews once, *yea twice*, and men perceive it not. Are we in the midst of the visions of the Almighty, let us consider what we see. He saw a basket of summer-fruit gathered and ready to be eaten; which signified, (1.) That they were ripe for destruction, rotten ripe, and it was time for God to put in the sickle of his judgments, and to cut them off; yea, the thing was in effect done already, and they lay ready to be eaten up. (2.) That the year of God's patience was drawing towards a conclusion: it was autumn with them, and their year would quickly have its period in a dismal winter. (3.) Those we call summer fruits that will not keep till winter, but must be used presently; an emblem of this people that had nothing solid or consistent in them.

2. The intent and meaning of this vision is no more but this. It signifies that the end is come upon my people Israel. The word that signifies the end is *ketz*, which is of near affinity with *kitz*, the word used for summer-fruit. God had long spared them, and bore with them, but now his patience is tired out; they are indeed his people Israel, but their end, that latter end they had been so often minded of, but had so long forgotten, is now come. Note, If sinners do not make an end of sin, God will make an end of them, yea, though they be his people Israel. What was said, chap. vii. 8. is here repeated as God's determined resolution, *I will not again pass by them any more*, they shall not be connived at as they have been, nor the judgment coming turned away.

3. The consequent of this shall be an universal desolation, ver. 3. When the end is come sorrow and death shall ride in triumph, they use to go together, and shall at length go away together, when in heaven there shall be no more death neither sorrow, Rev. xxi. 4. But here in a sinful world, in a sinful nation, (1.) Sorrow reigns; reigns to that degree that the songs of the temple shall be howlings: the songs of God's temple at Jerusalem, or rather of their idol temples where they used, when in honour of the golden calves they had eaten and drunk, to rise up to play. They were perhaps wanton profane songs, and it is certain, sooner or later, those will be turned into howlings. Or if they had a sound and shew of piety and religion, yet not coming from the heart, nor being sung to the glory of God, he valued them not, but would justly turn them into howlings. Note, Mourning will follow sinful mirth, yea and sacred mirth too if it be not sincere. And when God's judgments are abroad they will soon turn the greatest joy into the greatest heaviness; the temple songs that used to sound so pleasant, not only into sighs and groans but into loud howlings that sound so dismal. They shall come to the temple, and finding that in ruins, there they shall howl most bitterly. (2.) Death reigns, reigns to that degree that there shall be dead bodies, many dead bodies in every place, (Psal. ex. 6.) slain by sword or pestilence; so many that the survivors shall not bury them with the usual pomp and solemnity of funerals; they shall not so much as have the bell tolled, but they shall cast them forth with silence: shall bury them in the dead of the night, and charge all about them to be silent, and to take no notice of it; either because they have not wherewithal to bear the charges of a funeral, or because the killing disease being infectious none will come near them; or for fear the enemy should be provoked if they should be known to lament their gain. Or they shall charge themselves and one another silently to submit to the hand of God in these desolating judgments, and not to repine and quarrel with him. Or it may be taken not for a patient but a fullen silence; their hearts shall be hardened, and all these judgments shall not extort from them one word of acknowledgement, either of God's righteousness or their own unrighteousness.

4. ¶ Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail. 5. Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat; making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? 6. That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? 7. The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. 8. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. 9. And it shall come to pass in that day faith the yord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: 10. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring

up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head: and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

God is here contending with proud oppressors, and shewing them, (1.) The heinousness of the sin they were guilty of: in short they had the character of the unjust judge, Luke xviii. 2. that neither feared God nor regarded man.

1. Observe them in their devotions, and you will say, They have no reverence for God. As bad as they are they do indeed keep up a shew and form of godliness, they observe the sabbath and the new moon, they put some difference between those days and other days, but they were soon weary of them, and had no affection at all to them, but their hearts were wholly set upon the world and the things of it. It is a sad character which this gives of them that they said, *when will the sabbath be gone that we may sell corn?* Yet it is still the character of many that are called Christians. (1.) They were sick of sabbath days; when will they be gone? They were weary of the restraints of the sabbaths and the new-moons, and therefore withheld them over because they might do no service work therein. They were weary of the work and business of the sabbaths and new moons, staid at it, Mat. i. 13. and were as *Doeg*, detained before the Lord, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. they would rather have been any where else than about God's altars. Note, Sabbath-days and sabbath-work is a burden to carnal hearts that are always afraid of doing too much for God and eternity. Can we spend our time better than in communion with God? and how much time do we spend pleasantly with the world? Will not the sabbath be gone before we have done the work of it, and reaped the gains of it, why then should we be in such haste to part with it? (2.) They were fond of market-days; they longed to be selling corn and setting forth wheat. When they were employed in religious services they were thinking of their marketings, their hearts went after their covetousness, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. and thus made my father's house a house of merchandise, nay, a den of thieves. Therefore they were weary of holy duties, because their worldly business stood still the while; in which they were as in their element, but in God's sanctuary as a sistr upon dry ground. Note, Those are strangers to God, and enemies to themselves, that love market-days better than sabbath-days, that would rather be selling corn than worshipping God.

2. Observe them in their conversations and you will see they have no regard to man; and this commonly follows upon the former, those that have lost the favour of piety will not long retain the sense of common honesty. These here neither do justly, nor love mercy.

1. They cheat those they deal with. When they sell their corn they impose upon the buyer, both in giving out the goods and in receiving the money for them. They measure him the corn by their own measure, and pretend to give him what he agreed for, but they make the ephah small: The measure is scanty and not statute-measure, and so they wrong him that way; when they receive his money they must weigh it in their own scales, by their own weights, and their shekel they weigh by is above standard, they make the shekel great, so that the money being found too light must have more added to it; and so they cheat that way too, and this under colour and pretence of exactness in doing justice. By such wicked practices as these men shew such a greediness of the world, such a love of themselves, such a contempt of mankind in general, and of the particular persons they deal with, and of the sacred laws of justice, as speaks them to have in their hearts neither the fear nor love of that God who hath so plainly said, that false weights and balances are an abomination to him. Another instance of their fraudulent dealing is, that they sell the refuse of the wheat, and taking advantage of their neighbours ignorance or necessity, make them take it at the same price at which they sell the finest of the wheat.

2. They are barbarous and unmerciful to the poor, they swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land to fail. (1.) They valued themselves so much by their wealth, that they looked upon all that were poor with the highest contempt imaginable, they hated them, could not endure them, but abandoned them; and therefore did what they could to make them cease; not by relieving them to make them cease to be poor, but by banishing and destroying them to make them cease to be, or at least to be in their land. But he who thus reproacheth the poor, despiseth his maker, in whose hands rich and poor meet together. (2.) They were so eager to increase their wealth and make it more that they robbed the poor to enrich themselves; and therefore they fastened upon the poor to make a prey of them, because they were not able to right themselves, nor to resist or revenge the violence of their oppressors. Those riches that are got by the ruin of the poor will bring ruin on those that get them. They swallowed up the poor by making them hard bargains, and cheating them in those bargains; for therefore they falsify the balances by deceit, not only that they may enrich themselves, may have money at command, and so may have every thing else (as they think) at command too; but that they may impoverish those about them, and bring them so low that they may force them to become slaves to them, and so having drained them of every thing else, they may have their labour for nothing, or next to nothing: thus they buy the poor for silver, they bring them and their children into bondage, because they have not wherewithal to pay for the corn they have bought; see Neh. v. 2, 3, 4, 5. And there were so many that were reduced to this extremity, that the price was very low; and the oppressors had beat it down so, that you might buy a poor man to be your slave for a pair of shoes. Poverty was first invaded, and then liberty: it is the method of oppressors first to make men beggars, and then make them their vassals. Thus is the dignity of the human nature lost in the misery of those that are trampled on, and the tenderness of it in the sin of those that trample on them.

2. Observe the grievousness of the punishment that shall be inflicted on them for this sin. When the poor are injured, they will cry unto God, and he will hear their cry, and reckon with those that are injurious to them, for they being his receivers, he takes the wrongs done to them as done to himself, Exod. xxii. 23, 24.

1. God will remember their sin against them. He hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, ver. 7. by himself, for he can swear by no greater, and who but he is the glory and magnificence of Jacob? He hath sworn by those tokens of his presence with them, and his favour to them, which they had profaned and abused, and had done what they could to make them detestable to him; for he is said, chap. vi. 8. to abhor the excellency of Jacob. He swears in his wrath, swears by his own name, that name which was so well known and was so great in Israel; he swears, surely I will never forget any of their works; but upon all occasions they shall be remembered against them, for more is implied than is expressed. I will never forget them, is as much as to say, I will never forgive them; and then it speaks the case of these unjust, unmerciful men, to be miserable indeed, eternally miserable; woe, and a thousand woes, to that man that is cut off by an oath of God from all benefit by pardoning mercy; and those have reason to fear judgment without mercy that have shewed no mercy.

2. He will bring utter ruin and confusion upon them. It is here described



scribed largely, and in a great variety of emphatical expressions, that, if possible, they might be frightened into a sincere repentance and reformation.

1. There shall be an universal terror and consternation. *Shall not the land tremble for this?* ver. 8. *this land*, out of which you thought to have driven the poor? *Shall not every one mourn that dwelleth therein?* certainly they shall. Note, Those that will not tremble and mourn as they ought for national sins, shall be made to tremble and mourn for national judgments; those that look unconcerned upon the sins of the oppressors, which should make them tremble, and upon the miseries of the oppressed which should make them mourn, God will find out a way to make them tremble at the fury of those that oppress them, and mourn for their own losses and sufferings by it.

2. There shall be an universal deluge and desolation; when God comes forth against them, the waters of trouble and calamity shall rise up wholly as a flood, that swells when it is dammed up, and soon overflows its banks. Every thing shall make against them; that with which they thought to check the progress of God's judgments, shall but make them rise the higher. Judgments shall force their way, as the *breaking forth of waters*. The whole land shall be cast out and drowned, and laid under water, as the land of Egypt is every year by the overflowing of its river Nile. Or, the expressions may allude to some former judgments of God; their ruin shall rise up wholly as a flood, as Noah's flood which overwhelmed the whole world, so shall this the whole land; and the land shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt, i. e. as Pharaoh and his Egyptians were buried in the Red-sea, which was to them the flood of Egypt; both which judgments, as this here threatened, were the punishment of violence and oppression, which the Lord is the avenger of.

3. It shall surprise them, and come upon them when they little think of it, ver. 9. *I will cause the sun to go down at noon*, when its in its full strength and lustre; at their noon, when they promise themselves a long afternoon, and think they have at least half a day good before them. The earth shall be darkened in the clear day; when every thing looks pleasant and hopeful. This uncertainty are all our creature-comforts and enjoyments, even life itself: the highest degree of health and prosperity often proves the next degree to sickness and adversity; Job's sun went down at noon; many are taken away in the midst of their days, and their sun goes down at noon; in the midst of life we are in death. Thus terrible are the judgments of God to those that sleep in security; they are to them as the sun's going down at noon; the less they are expected the more confounding they are: when they cry peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes; comes as a snare, Luke xxi. 35.

4. It shall change their note and mar all their mirth; ver. 10. *I will turn your feasts into mourning*, as ver. 3. *the songs of the temple into howlings*. Note, The end of the sinner's mirth and jollity is heaviness. As to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness, which gives them the oil of joy for mourning, so on the wicked there falls darkness in the midst of light which turns their laughter into mourning, their joy into heaviness. So great, so general shall the desolation be, that sackcloth shall be brought upon all loins, and baldness upon every head, instead of the well-set hair, and the rich garments they used to wear. The mourning at that day shall be as mourning for an only son, which speaks the most bitter and lasting lamentation. But are there no hopes that when things are at the worst they will mend? and that at evening time it will yet be light? No, even the end thereof shall be as a bitter day; a day of bitter mourning; the state of impenitent sinners grow worse and worse; and the last of all will be the worst of all; *This shall ye have at my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow*.

II. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: 12. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east: they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. 13. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. 14. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy God, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

In these verses is threatened,

1. A general judgment of spiritual famine coming upon the whole land; a famine of the word of God; the failing of oracles and the scarcity of good preaching. This is spoken of as a thing at some distance, *the days come*, they will come hereafter, when another kind of darkness shall come upon that land of light. When Amos prophesied, and for a considerable time after, there was a great plenty of prophets, abundant opportunities of hearing the word of God in season and out of season, they had precept upon precept, and line upon line; prophecy was their daily bread; and it is likely they forfeited upon it, as Israel on the manna, and therefore God threatens that hereafter he will deprive them of this privilege. Probably in the land of Israel there were not so many prophets about the time that their destruction came upon them, as there were in the land of Judah; and when the ten tribes went into captivity they saw not their signs, there were no more any prophets, none to show them how long, Psal. lxxiv. 9. The Jewish church after Malachi had no prophets for many ages; and some think this threatening looks further yet, to the blindness which is in part happened to Israel in the days of the Messiah, and the veil that is on the heart of the unbelieving Jews. They reject the gospel and the ministers of it that God doth send to them, and covet to have prophets of their own as their fathers had, but they shall have none; *the kingdom of God being taken from them and given to another people*. Observe here,

(1.) What the judgment itself is that is threatened. It is a famine, a scarcity not of bread and water, which are the necessary supports of the body, and the want of which is very grievous; but a much sorer judgment than that, even a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. There shall be no congregations for ministers to preach to, nor any ministers to preach; nor any instructions and abilities given to those that do set up for preachers, to enable them for their work. The word of the Lord shall be precious and scarce, there shall be no vision; 1 Sam. iii. 1. They shall have the written word, Bibles to read, but no ministers to explain and apply it to them; the water in the well but nothing to draw. It is a gracious promise, *Iju. xxx. 20.* that though they have a scarcity of bread, they shall have plenty of the means of grace: God will give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, but their eyes shall see their teachers; and it was a common saying among the Puritans, that brown bread and the gospel is good fare; but it is here a threatening, that on the contrary they should have plenty enough of bread and water, and yet their

teachers should be removed. Now, (1.) This was the departure of a great part of their glory from their land. This made their nation great and high, that to them were committed the oracles of God; but when those were taken from them, their beauty was stained and their honour laid in the dust, (2.) This was a token of God's highest displeasure against them; surely he was angry indeed with them, when he would no more speak to them as he had done, and had abandoned them to ruin, when he would no more afford them the means of bringing them to repentance. (3.) This made all the other calamities that were upon them truly melancholy, that they had no prophets to instruct and comfort them from the word of God, nor to give them any hopeful prospect. We should say at any time, and will say in a time of trouble, that a famine of the word of God is of all other the forest of famine, the heaviest judgment.

(2.) What will be the effect of this, ver. 12. *They shall wander from sea to sea*, from the sea of Tiberias to the great sea, from one border of the country to another, to see if God will send them prophets either by sea or land from other countries; since they have none among themselves, they shall go from the north to the east, when they are disappointed in one place, they shall try another, and shall run to and fro, as men at a loss, and in a hot pursuit to seek the word of the Lord, to enquire if there be any prophets, any prophecy, any message from God, but they shall not find it. (1.) Though to many this is no affliction at all, yet some will be very sensible of it as a great grievance, and will gladly travel far to hear a good sermon, but they shall sensibly feel the loss of those mercies which others have foolishly flung away. (2.) Even those that slighted prophets when they had them, shall wish for them, as Saul did for Samuel, when they are deprived of them: many never know the worth of mercies till they feel the want of them. Or it may be meant thus, though they should thus wander from sea to sea in quest of the word of God, yet they shall not find it. Note, The means of grace are moveable things; and the candlestick, when we think it stands most firm, yet may be removed out of its place: Rev. ii. 5. and those that now slight the days of the son of man, may wish in vain to see them. And in the day of this famine the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst, ver. 13. those who one would think could well enough have borne the toil, yet shall sink under it. The Jewish churches, and the masters of their synagogues, some take to be meant by the virgins and the young men; these shall lose the word of the Lord; and the benefit of divine revelation, and shall faint away for want of it, shall lose all their strength and beauty. Those that trust in their own merit and righteousness, and think they have no need of Christ, others take to be meant by the fair virgins and the choice young men, those shall faint for thirst, when those that hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ shall be abundantly satisfied and filled.

2. The particular destruction of those that were ringleaders in idolatry, ver. 14. Observe, (1.) The sin they are charged with. *They swear by the sin of Samaria*, i. e. by the God of Samaria, the idol that was worshipped at Beth-el, not far off from Samaria: thus did they glory in their shame, and swear by that as their god, which was their iniquity; thinking that could help them which would certainly ruin them; and giving the highest honour to that which they should have looked upon with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. They say, *Thy God, O Dan, liveth*, that was the other golden-calf; a dumb dead idol, and yet is caressed and complimented as if it had been the living and true God. They say, *the manner, or way of Beer-sheba liveth*; they swear by the religion of Beer-sheba, the way and manner of worship used there, which they looked upon as sacred, and therefore swear by it, and appealed to it as a judge of controversy. Thus the papists swear by the mass, as the manner of Beer-sheba. (2.) The destruction they are threatened with; those who thus give that honour to idols which is due to God alone, will find the God they affront is thereby made their enemy, so that they shall fall, and the gods they serve cannot stand their friends, so that they shall never rise again. They will find that God is jealous, and will resent the indignity done him; and that he will be victorious, and it is to no purpose to contend with him.

## CHAP. IX.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Judgments threatened, which the sinners shall not escape, ver. 1-4. which an almighty power shall inflict, ver. 5, 6. which the people of Israel have deserved as a sinful people, ver. 7, 8. and yet it shall not be the utter ruin of their nation, ver. 8. for a remnant of good people shall escape, ver. 9. But the wicked ones shall perish, ver. 10. (2.) Mercy promised which was to be bestowed in the latter days, ver. 11-15. as appears by the application of it to the days of the Messiah, Acts xv. 16. And with those comfortable promises, after all the foregoing rebukes and threatenings, the book concludes.

I SAW the LORD standing upon the altar; and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them: and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. 2. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: 3. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence: and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: 4. And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. 5. And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood: and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. 6. It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name. 7. Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir: 8. Behold, the eyes



eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth: saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD. 9. For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. 10. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

We have here the justice of God passing sentence upon a provoking people; and observe,

1. With what solemnity the sentence is passed. The prophet saw in vision the Lord standing upon the altar, ver. 1. the altar of burnt-offerings, for the Lord hath a sacrifice, and multitudes must fall as victims to his justice. He is removed from the mercy-seat between the cherubims, and stands upon the altar, the judgment seat, on which the fire of God used to fall to devour the sacrifices. He stands upon the altar, to shew that the ground of his controversy with this people was their profanation of his holy things; here he stands to avenge the quarrel of his altar; as also to signify, that the sin of the house of Israel, like that of the house of Eli, shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever, 1 Sam. iii. 14. He stands on the altar to prohibit sacrifice. Now the order given is, *Smite the lintel of the door, of the temple, the chapter, smite it with such a blow that the posts may shake, and cut them, wound them, in the head, all of them: break down the door of God's house, or of the courts of his house, in token of this that he is going out from it, and forsaking it, and then all judgments are breaking in upon it.* Or, it signifies the destruction of those in the first place, that should be as the door-posts to the nation for its defence, so as that they being broken down it becomes as a city without gates and bars. Smite the king, who is as the lintel of the door, that the princes, who are as the posts may shake; cut them in the head, cleave them down, all of them, as wood for the fire; and I will slay the last of them, the posterity of them, them and their families, or the last of them, them and all that are employed under them: or, I will slay them all, them and all that remain of them, till it comes to the last man; the slaughter shall be general. There is no living for those of whom God hath said *I will slay them*; no standing before his sword.

2. What effectual care is taken that none shall escape the execution of this sentence. This is enlarged upon here, and is intended for warning to all that provoke the Lord to jealousy: let sinners read it and tremble, as there is no fighting it out with God, so there is no fleeing from him. His judgments when they come with commission, as they will over power the strongest that think to out-face them, so they will overtake the swiftest that think to out-run them, ver. 1. Those of them that flee, and take to their heels, they shall soon be out of breath, and shall not flee away, out of the reach of danger; for as sometimes the wicked flee when none pursues, so he cannot flee away when God pursues, though he would fain flee out of his hand. Nay, he that escapeth of them, that thinks he has gained his point, yet he shall not be delivered; evil pursues sinners, and will arrest them.

This is here enlarged upon by shewing, that wherever sinners flee for shelter from God's justice, it will overtake them, and the shelter will prove but a refuge of lies; what David saith of the ubiquity of God's presence, Psalm cxxxix. 7, 8, 9, is here said of the extent of God's power and justice. (1.) Hell itself, though it has its name in English from its being *hilled*, or covered over, or hidden, cannot hide them, ver. 2. Though they dig into hell, into the center of the earth, or the darkest recesses of it, yet thence shall my hand take them, and bring them forth to be made public monuments of divine justice. The grave is a hiding place to the righteous from the malice of the world, Job iii. 17. but it shall be no hiding place to the wicked from the justice of God; from thence God's hands shall take them, when they shall rise in the great day to everlasting shame and contempt. (2.) Heaven, though it has its name from being *heaved* or lifted up, shall not put them out of the reach of God's judgments; as hell cannot hide them, so heaven will not: though they climb up to heaven in their own conceit, yet thence will I bring them down; those whom God brings to heaven by his grace shall never be brought down; but those who climb thither themselves, by their own presumption, and confidence in themselves, will be brought down, and filled with shame. (3.) The top of Carmel, one of the highest parts of the dust of the world in that country shall not protect them; though they hide themselves there, where they imagine nobody will look for them, I will search and take them out thence; neither the thickest bushes, nor the darkest caves in the top of Carmel, will serve to hide them. (4.) The bottom of the sea shall not serve to conceal them; though they think to hide themselves there, even there the judgments of God shall find them out, and lay hold on them; thence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them; the crooked serpent, even the dragon that is in the sea, Isa. xxvii. 1. They shall find their plague and death there, where they hope to find shelter and protection; diving will stand them in no more stead than climbing. (5.) Remote countries will not befriend them, nor shall lesser judgments excuse them from greater, ver. 4. Though they go into captivity before their enemies, who carry them to places at a great distance, and mingle them with their own people, among whom they seem to be lost, yet that shall not serve their turn, thence will I command the sword and it shall slay them; the sword of the enemy, or one another's sword; when God judgeth he will overcome. And that which binds on all this, and makes their escape impossible, and their ruin inevitable is, that God will set his eyes upon them for evil and not for good; his eyes are in every place, are upon all men, and upon all the ways of men, upon some for good to shew himself strong on their behalf, but upon others for evil, to take notice of their sins, Job xiii. 27. and take all opportunities of punishing them for their sins. Their case is truly miserable that have the providence of God, and all the dispensations of it against them, working for their hurt.

3. What a great and mighty God he is that passeth his sentence upon them, and will take the executing of it into his own hands. Threatenings are more or less formidable, according to the power of him that threatens. We laugh at impotent wrath, but the wrath of God is not so; it is omnipotent wrath, who knows the power of it? What he had before said he would do, chap. viii. 8. is here repeated, that he would make the land melt and tremble, and all that dwell therein mourn, that the judgment should rise up wholly like a flood, and the country should be drownded, and laid under water as by the flood of Egypt, ver. 5. But is he able to make his words good? Yes, certainly he is, he doth but touch the land and it melteth, touch the mountains and they smoke; he can do it with the greatest ease, for, (1.) He is the Lord God of hosts that undertakes to do it; the God that has all power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck, that having made them all, and given them their several capacities, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and all their powers. Very miserable is the case of those that have the Lord God of hosts against them, for they have hosts against them, the whole creation at war with them. (2.) He is the Creator and Governor of the

upper world: *It is he that buildeth his stories in the heavens*; the celestial orbs or spheres, one over another, as so many stories in a high and stately palace, are his, for he built them at first, when he said, *Let there be a firmament, and he made the firmament*, and he buildeth them still, is continually building them, not that they need repair, but by his providence he still up-holdeth them: his power is the pillars of heaven, by which it is born up. Now he that hath the command of those stories is certainly to be feared, for from thence, as from a castle, he can fire upon his enemies, or cast upon them great hailstones, as on the Canaanites, or make the stars in their courses, the furniture of those stories to fight against them as against Siserah. (3.) He has the conduct and command of this lower world too, in which we dwell: the terraqueous globe, both earth and sea, so that which way soever his enemies think to make their escape he will meet them, or to make opposition he will match them. Do they think to make a land-fight of it? He hath founded his troop in the earth, his troop of guards which he has at command, and makes use of for the protection of his subjects, and the punishment of his enemies. All the creatures on earth make one bundle, as the margin reads it, one bundle of arrows, out of which he takes what he pleaseth to discharge against the persecutors, Psalm vii. 3. They are all one army, one body, so closely are they connected, and so harmoniously; and so much in concert do they act for the accomplishment of their Creator's purposes. Do they think to make a sea-fight of it? he will be too hard for them there, for he has the waters of the sea at command, even its waves, the most tumultuous rebellious waters do obey him. He calls for the waters of the sea in the course of his common providence, causeth vapours to ascend out of it, and poureth them out in showers, the small rain, and the great rain of his strength, upon the face of the earth; this was mentioned before as a reason why we should seek the Lord, chap. v. 8. and make him our friend, as it is here made a reason why we should fear him, and dread having him our enemy.

4. How justly God passeth this sentence upon the people of Israel; he doth not destroy them by an act of sovereignty but by an act of righteousness; for, ver. 8. it is a sinful kingdom, and the eyes of the Lord are upon it discovering it to be so, he sees the great sinfulness of it, and therefore he will destroy it from off the face of the earth. Note, When those kingdoms that in name and profession were holy kingdoms, and kingdoms of priests, as Israel was, become sinful kingdoms, no other can be expected, but that they should be cut off and abandoned. Let sinful kingdoms, and sinful families, and sinful persons too, see the eyes of the Lord upon them, observing all their wickedness, and reserving the notice of it for the day of reckoning and recompence. This being a sinful kingdom, see how light God makes of it, ver. 7. (1.) Of the relation wherein he stood to it. *Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?* A sad change? Children of Israel become as children of the Ethiopians? 1. They were to *in themselves*, that was their sin; it is a thing to be greatly lamented, that the children of Israel often become as the children of the Ethiopians; the children of godly parents degenerate, and become the reverse of those that went before them: Those that were well educated and trained up in the knowledge and fear of God, and set out well, and promised fair, throw off their profession, and become as bad as the worst. *How is the gold become dim?* 2. They were so in God's account, and that was their punishment; he valued them no more, though they were children of Israel, than if they had been children of the Ethiopians. We read of one in the title of Psalm vii. that was Cush (an Ethiopian, so some understand it) and yet a Benjamite. Those that by birth and profession, are children of Israel, if they degenerate and become wicked and vile, are to God no more than children of the Ethiopians. This is an intimation of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews in the days of the Messiah, because they embraced not the doctrine of Christ, the kingdom of God was taken from them, they were unchurched, and cast out of covenant, became as children of the Ethiopians, and are so to this day. And it is true of those that are called Christians, but do not live up to their name and profession, that rest in the form of piety, but live under the power of reigning iniquity, that they are to God as children of the Ethiopians; he rejects them and their services. (2.) See how light he makes of the favours he had conferred upon them, they thought he would not, he could not cast them off, and put them upon a level with other nations, because he had done that for them which he had not done for other nations, whereby they thought he was bound to them, so as never to leave them; No, saith he, The favours shewed you are not so distinguishing as you think they are; *Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?* It is true, I have; but I have also brought the Philistines from Captor, or Cappadocia, where they were either natives or captives, or both, they are called the remnant of the country of Captor, Jer. xlvii. 4. and the Philistines were joined with the Captorim, Gen. x. 4. In like manner the Syrians were brought up from Kir, when they had been carried away thither, 2 Kings xvi. 19. Note, If God's Israel lose the peculiarity of their holiness, they lose the peculiarity of their privileges; and what was designed as a favour of special grace shall be set in another light, shall have its property altered, and shall become but an act of common providence; if professors liken themselves to the world, God will level them with the world. And if we live not up to the obligation of God's mercies, we forfeit the honour and comfort of them.

5. How graciously God will separate between the precious and the vile in the day of retribution. Though the wicked Israelites shall be as the wicked Ethiopians, and their being called Israelites shall stand them in no stead, yet the pious Israelites shall not be as the wicked ones; no, the Judge of all the earth will do right, more right than to slay the righteous with the wicked, Gen. xviii. 25. His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom, to spy out those in it that preserve their integrity, and swim against the stream: Who sigh and cry for the abominations of their land, and they shall be marked for preservation; so that the destruction shall not be total, *I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob*, not ruin them by wholesale and in the gross, good and bad together, but I will distinguish, as becomes a righteous judge. The house of Israel shall be sifted as corn is sifted, they shall be greatly hurried and shaken and tossed, but still in the hands of God, in both his hands as the sieve in the hands of him that sifteth, ver. 9. *I will sift the house of Israel among all nations*, wherever they are shaken and scattered, God will have his eye upon them, and will take care to separate between the corn and chaff, which was the thing he designed in sifting them. (1.) The righteous ones among them that are as the solid wheat, shall none of them perish; they shall be delivered either from or through the common calamities of the kingdom; *not the least grain shall fall on the earth*; so as to be lost and forgotten; not the least stone, so the word is, for the good corn is weighty as a stone, in comparison with that which we call light corn. Note, Whatever shakings there may be in the world, God doth and will effectually provide that none that are truly his shall be truly miserable. (2.) The wicked ones among them that are hardened in their sins, shall all of them perish, ver. 10. See what a height of impiety they are come to, *They say, the evil shall not overtake and prevent us*. They think they are innocent and do not deserve punishment; or that the profession they make of relation to God will be their exemption and security from punishment; or, that they shall be able to make their part good against the judgments of



of God, that they shall flee so swiftly from them that they shall not overtake them, or guard so carefully against them, that they shall not prevent or surprise them. Note, Hope of impunity is the deceitful refuge of the impenitent. But see what it will come to at last; *all the sinners that thus flatter themselves and affront God, shall die by the sword, the sword of war, which to them shall be the sword of divine vengeance; yea, though they be the sinners of my people; for their profession shall not be their protection.* Note, Evil is often nearest those that put it at the greatest distance from them.

11. ¶ In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: 12. That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this. 13. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the ploughmen shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth the seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. 14. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 15. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

To him to whom all the prophets bear witness, this prophet here in the close bears his testimony; and speaks of *that day*, those days that shall come in which God will do great things for his church, by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, for the rejecting of which, the rejection of the Jews was foretold in the foregoing verses. The promise here is said to agree to the planting of the Christian church, and in that to be fulfilled, Acts xv. 15, 16, 17.

1. It is promised that in the Messiah, the kingdom of David shall be restored, ver. 11, the *tabernacle of David* it is called, i. e. his house and family, which, though great and fixed, yet in comparison with the kingdom of heaven was mean and moveable as a *tabernacle*. The church militant in its present state, dwelling as in *shepherds tents to feed*, as in soldiers tents to fight, is the *tabernacle of David*. God's tabernacle is called the *tabernacle of David*, because David desired and chose to dwell in God's tabernacle forever, Psalm lxi. 4. Now (1.) These tabernacles were fallen, and gone to decay, the royal family was so impoverished, its power abridged, its honour stained and laid in the dust; for many of that race degenerated, and in the captivity it lost the imperial dignity; fore breaches were made upon it, and at length it was laid in ruins. So it was with the church of the Jews, in the latter days of it its glory was departed, it was like a tabernacle broken down and brought to ruin, in respect both of purity and prosperity. (2.) By Jesus Christ these tabernacles were raised and re-built. In him God's covenant with David has its accomplishment, and the glory of that house which was not only sullied, but quite sunk, revived again, the breaches of it were closed, and its ruins raised up as in the days of old; nay the spiritual glory of the family of Christ far exceeded the temporal glory of the family of David, when it was at its height. In him also God's covenant with Israel had its accomplishment, and in the gospel church the *tabernacle of God* was set up among men again, and raised up out of the ruins of the Jewish church. This is quoted in the first council at Jerusalem, as referring to the calling in of the Gentiles, and God's taking out of them a people for his name. Note, While the world stands God will have a church in it, and if it be fallen down in one place, and among one people it shall be raised up elsewhere.

2. It is promised that that kingdom shall be enlarged, and the territories of it shall extend far, by the accession of many countries to it, ver. 12. That the house of David may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, i. e. That Christ may have them given him for his inheritance, even the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Psalm ii. 8. Those that had been strangers and enemies, shall become willing, faithful subjects to the son of David, shall be added to the church, or those of them that are called by my name, saith the Lord, i. e. that belong to the election of grace, and are ordained to eternal life, Acts xiii. 48. for it is true of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, that the election hath obtained, and the rest were

blinded. Rom. xi. 7. Christ died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, here said to be those that were called by his name; the promise is to all that were as yet off, even as many of them as the Lord our God shall call, Acts ii. 39. St. James expounds this as a promise That the residue of men should seek after the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called. But may the promise be depended upon? Yes, the Lord saith this, who doth this; who can do it, who hath determined to do it, the power of whose grace is engaged for the doing of it; and with whom saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us.

3. That in the kingdom of the Messiah, there shall be great plenty, and abundance of all good things, that the country doth produce, ver. 13. The ploughman shall overtake the reaper, i. e. There shall be such a plentiful harvest every year, and so much corn to be gathered in, that it shall last all summer even till autumn, when it is time to begin to plough again; and in like manner the vintage shall continue till seed time; and there shall be such abundance of grapes, that even the mountains shall drop new wine into the vessels of the grape gatherers, and the hills that were dry and barren shall be moistened, and shall melt with the fatness, or the *medownness* (as we call it) of the soil. Compare this with Joel ii. 24. and iii. 18. This must certainly be understood of the abundance of spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which all those are and shall be blessed with that are in sincerity added to Christ and his church; they shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of God's house, with the graces and comforts of his Spirit; they shall have bread, the bread of life, to strengthen their hearts, and the wine of divine consolations to make them glad; meat indeed and drink indeed; all the benefit that comes to the souls of men from the Word and Spirit of God, these had been long confined to the vineyard of the Jewish church, divine revelation and the power that attended it were to be found only within that inclosure; but in gospel times, the mountains and hills of the Gentile world shall be enriched with these privileges, by the gospel of Christ preached, and professed, and received in the power of it. When great multitudes were converted to the faith of Christ, and nations were born at once, when the preachers of the gospel were always caused to triumph in the success of their preaching, then the ploughman overtook the reaper; and when the Gentile churches were enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge, and all manner of spiritual gifts, 1 Cor. i. 5. then the mountains dropped sweet wine.

4. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be well peopled, as the country shall be replenished, so shall the cities be; there shall be mouths for this meat, ver. 14. Those that were carried captives shall be brought back out of their captivity, their enemies shall not be able to detain them in the land of their captivity; nor shall they themselves incline to settle in it, but the remnant shall return; and shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them, shall form themselves into Christian churches, and set up pure doctrine, worship, and discipline among them, according to the gospel charter, by which Christ's cities are incorporated; and shall enjoy the benefit and comfort thereof: they shall plant vineyards, and make gardens, though the mountains and hills drop wine, and the privileges of the gospel church are laid in common, yet they shall inclose for themselves not to monopolize these privileges to the exclusion of others, but to appropriate and improve these privileges in communion with others, and they shall drink the wine and eat the fruit of their own vineyards, and gardens; for they that take pains in religion, as men must do about their vineyards and gardens, shall have both the pleasure and the profit of it. The bringing again of the captivity of God's Israel, which is here promised, may refer to the cancelling of the ceremonial law, which had been long to God's Israel as a yoke of bondage, and the investing of them in the liberty wherewith Christ came to make his church free, Gal. v. 1.

5. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall take such deep rooting in the world, as never to be rooted out of it, ver. 15. I will plant them upon their land, God's spiritual Israel shall be planted, by the right hand of God himself, upon the land assigned them, and they shall no more be pulled up out of it, as the old Jewish church was. God will preserve them from throwing themselves out of it by a total apostacy, and will preserve them from being thrown out of it by the malice of their enemies; the church may be corrupted, but shall not quite forsake God, may be persecuted, but shall not quite be forsaken of God, so that the gates of hell, neither with their temptations, nor with their terrors, shall prevail against it. Two things secure the perpetuity of the church; (1.) God's grants to it. It is the land which I have given them, and God will confirm and maintain his own grants. The part he has given to his people, is that good part which shall never be taken from them; he will not revoke his grant, and all the powers of earth and hell shall not invalidate it. (2.) Its interest in him. He is the Lord thy God who has said it, and will make it good: Thine O Israel, who shall reign for ever, as thine unto all generations. And because he lives, the church shall live also.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET AMOS.



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1. With what solemnity the sentence is passed. The prophet saw in vision the Lord standing upon the altar, ver. 1. the altar of burnt-offerings, for the Lord hath a sacrifice, and multitudes must fall as victims to his justice. He is removed from the mercy seat between the cherubims, and stands upon the altar, the judgment seat, on which the fire of God used to fall to devour the sacrifices. He stands upon the altar, to shew that the ground of his controversy with this people was their profanation of his holy things; here he stands to avenge the quarrel of his altar; as also to signify, that the sin of the house of Israel, like that of the house of Eli, shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever, 1 Sam. iii. 14. He stands on the altar to prohibit sacrifice. Now the order given is, *Smite the lintel of the door*, of the temple, the chapter, smite it with such a blow that the posts may shake, and cut them, wound them, in the head, all of them: break down the door of God's house, or of the courts of his house, in token of this that he is going out from it, and forsaking it, and then all judgments are breaking in upon it. Or, it signifies the destruction of those in the first place, that should be as the door-posts to the nation for its defence, so as that they being broken down it becomes as a city without gates and bars. Smite the king, who is as the lintel of the door, that the princes, who are as the posts may shake; cut them in the head, cleave them down, all of them, as wood for the fire; and I will slay the last of them, the posterity of them, them and their families, or the last of them, them and all that are employed under them: or, I will slay them all, them and all that remain of them, till it comes to the last man; the slaughter shall be general. There is no living for those of whom God hath said I will slay them: no standing before his sword.

2. What effectual care is taken that none shall escape the execution of this sentence. This is enlarged upon here, and is intended for warning to all that provoke the Lord to jealousy: let sinners read it and tremble, as there is no fighting it out with God, so there is no fleeing from him. His judgments when they come with commission, as they will over power the strongest that think to out-face them, so they will so shake the fastest that think to out-run them, ver. 1. Those of them that flee, and take to their heels, they shall soon be out of breath, and shall not see away, out of the reach of danger; for as sometimes the wicked flee when none pursues, so he cannot flee away when God pursues, though he would fain flee out of his hand. Nay, he that escapeth of them, that thinks he has gained his point, yet he shall not be delivered; evil pursue sinners, and will arrest them.

This is here enlarged upon by shewing, that wherever sinners flee for shelter from God's justice, it will overtake them, and the shelter will prove but a refuge of lies; what David saith of the ubiquity of God's presence, Psalm cxxxix. 7, 8, 9. is here said of the extent of God's power and justice. (1.) Hell itself, though it has its name in English from its being *hilled*, or covered over, or hidden, cannot hide them, ver. 2. Though they dig into hell, into the center of the earth, or the darkest recesses of it, yet thence shall my hand take them, and bring them forth to be made public monuments of divine justice. The grave is a hiding place to the righteous from the malice of the world, Job iii. 17. but it shall be no hiding place to the wicked from the justice of God; from thence God's hands shall take them, when they shall rise in the great day to everlasting shame and contempt. (2.) Heaven, though it has its name from being *heaved*, or lifted up, shall not put them out of the reach of God's judgments; as hell cannot hide them, so heaven will not: though they climb up to heaven in their own conceit, yet thence will I bring them down; those whom God brings to heaven by his grace shall never be brought down; but those who climb thither themselves, by their own presumption, and confidence in themselves, will be brought down, and filled with shame. (3.) The top of Carmel, one of the highest parts of the dust of the world in that country shall not protect them; though they hide themselves there, where they imagine nobody will look for them, I will search and take them out thence; neither the thickest bushes, nor the dark caves in the tops of Carmel, will serve to hide them. (4.) The bottom of the sea shall not serve to conceal them; though they think to hide themselves there, even there the judgments of God shall find them out, and lay load on them: thence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them; the crooked serpent, even the dragon that is in the sea, Isa. xxvii. 1. They shall find their plague and death there, where they hope to find shelter and protection; diving will find them in no more dead than climbing. (5.) Remote countries will not befriend them, nor shall lesser judgments excuse them from greater, ver. 4. Though they go into captivity before their enemies, who carry them to places at a great distance, and mingle them with their own people, among whom they seem to be lost, yet that shall not serve their turn, thence will I command the sword and it shall slay them; the sword of the enemy, or one another's sword; when God judgeth he will overcome. And that which binds on all this, and makes their escape impossible, and their ruin inevitable is, that God will set his eyes upon them for evil and not for good; his eyes are in every place, are upon all men, and upon all the ways of men, upon some for good to shew himself strong on their behalf, but upon others for evil, to take notice of their sins, Job xlii. 27. and take all opportunities of punishing them for their sins. Their case is truly miserable that have the providence of God, and all the dispensations of it against them, working for their hurt.

3. What a great and mighty God he is that passeth his sentence upon them, and will take the executing of it into his own hands. Threatenings are more or less formidable, according to the power of him that threatens. We laugh at impotent wrath, but the wrath of God is not so; it is omnipotent wrath, who knows the power of it? What he had before said he would do, chap. viii. 8. is here repeated, that he would make the land melt and tremble, and all that dwell therein mourn, that the judgment should rise up wholly like a flood, and the country should be drowned, and laid under water as by the flood of Egypt, ver. 5. But is he able to make his words good? Yes, certainly he is, he doth but touch the land and it melteth, touch the mountains and they smoke; he can do it with the greatest ease, for, (1.) He is the Lord God of hosts that undertakes to do it; the God that has all power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck, that having made them all, and given them their several capacities, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and all their powers. Very miserable is the case of those that have the Lord God of hosts against them, for they have hosts against them, the whole creation at war with them. (2.) He is the Creator and Governor of the

upper world: It is he that buildeth his stories in the heavens; the celestial orbs or spheres, one over another, as so many stories in a high and stately palace, are his, for he built them at first, when he said, *Let there be a firmament, and he made the firmament*, and he buildeth them still, is continually building them, not that they need repair, but by his providence he still upholdeth them; his power is the pillars of heaven, by which it is born up. Now he that hath the command of those stories is certainly to be feared, for from thence, as from a castle, he can fire upon his enemies, or call upon them great hailstones, as on the Canaanites, or make the stars in their courses, the furniture of those stories to fight against them as against Sissera. (3.) He has the conduct and command of this lower world too, in which we dwell: the terraqueous globe, both earth and sea, so that which way soever his enemies think to make their escape he will meet them, or to make opposition he will match them. Do they think to make a land-sight of it? He hath founded his troop in the earth, his troop of guards which he has at command, and makes use of for the protection of his subjects, and the punishment of his enemies. All the creatures on earth make one bundle, as the margin reads it, one bundle of arrows, out of which he takes what he pleaseth to discharge against the persecutors, Psalm vii. 3. They are all one army, one body, so closely are they connected, and so harmoniously; and so much in concert do they act for the accomplishment of their Creator's purposes. Do they think to make a sea-sight of it? he will be too hard for them there, for he has the waters of the sea at command, even its waves, the most tumultuous rebellious waters do obey him. He calls for the waters of the sea in the course of his common providence, earth appears to grieve out of it, and poureth them out in showers, the small rain, and the great rain of his strength, upon the face of the earth; this was mentioned before as a reason why we should seek the Lord, chap. vii. 12. and make it our friend, as it is here made a reason why we should fear him, and dread him as our enemy.

4. How justly God passeth this sentence upon the people of Israel; he doth not destroy them by an act of sovereignty but by an act of righteousness; for, ver. 8. it is a sinful kingdom, and the eyes of the Lord are upon it discovering it to be so, he sees the great sinfulness of it, and therefore he will destroy it from off the face of the earth. Note, When those kingdoms that in name and profession were holy kingdoms, and kingdoms of priests, as Israel was, become sinful kingdoms, no other can be expected, but that they should be cut off and abandoned. Let sinful kingdoms, and sinful families, and sinful persons too, see the eyes of the Lord upon them, observing all their wickedness, and reserving the notice of it for the day of reckoning and recompence. This being a sinful kingdom, see how light God makes of it, ver. 7. (1.) Of the relation wherein he stood to it. *Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?* A sad change! Children of Israel become as children of the Ethiopians? 1. They were so in themselves, that was their sin; it is a thing to be greatly lamented, that the children of Israel often become as the children of the Ethiopians; the children of godly parents degenerate, and become the reverse of those that went before them: Those that were well educated and trained up in the knowledge and fear of God, and set out well, and promised fair, throw off their profession, and become as bad as the worst. *How is the gold become dim?* 2. They were so in God's account, and that was their punishment; he valued them no more, though they were children of Israel, than if they had been children of the Ethiopians. We read of one in the title of Psalm vii. that was Cush (an Ethiopian, so some understand it) and yet a Benjamite. Those that by birth and profession, are children of Israel, if they degenerate and become wicked and vile, are to God no more than children of the Ethiopians. This is an intimation of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews in the days of the Messiah, because they embraced not the doctrine of Christ, the kingdom of God was taken from them, they were unchurched, and cut out of covenant, became as children of the Ethiopians, and are so to this day. And it is true of those that are called Christians, but do not live up to their name and profession, that rest in the form of piety, but live under the power of reigning iniquity, that they are to God as children of the Ethiopians; he rejects them and their services. (2.) See how light he makes of the favours he had conferred upon them, they thought he would not, he could not cast them off, and put them upon a level with other nations, because he had done that for them which he had not done for other nations, where by they thought he was bound to them, so as never to leave them: No, saith he, The favours shewed you are not so distinguishing as you think they are; *Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?* It is true, I have; but I have also brought the Philistines from Egypt, or Upper Egypt, where they were either natives or captives, or both, they are called the remnant of the country of Captivity, Jer. xlvii. 1. and the Philistines are joined with the Captivity, Gen. x. 4. In like manner the Syrians were brought up from Kir, when they had been carried away thither, 2 Kings xvi. 19. Note, If God's Israel lose the peculiarity of their holiness, they lose the peculiarity of their privileges; and what was designed as a favour of special grace shall be set in another light, shall have its property altered, and shall become but an act of common providence; if professors liken themselves to the world, God will level them with the world. And if we live not up to the obligation of God's mercies, we forfeit the honour and comfort of them.

5. How graciously God will separate between the precious and the vile in the day of retribution. Though the wicked Israelites shall be as the wicked Ethiopians, and their being called Israelites shall stand them in no stead, yet the pious Israelites shall not be as the wicked ones; no, the Judges of all the earth will do right, more right than to slay the righteous with the wicked, Gen. xviii. 25. His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom, to spy out those in it that preserve their integrity, and swim against the stream: Who sigh and cry for the abominations of their land, and they shall be marked for preservation; so that the destruction shall not be total, I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, not ruin them by wholesale and in the gross, good and bad together, but I will distinguish, as becomes a righteous judge. The house of Israel shall be sifted as corn is sifted, they shall be greatly hurried and shaken and tossed, but still in the hands of God, in both his hands as the sieve in the hands of him that sifteth, ver. 9. I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, wherever they are shaken and scattered, God will have his eye upon them, and will take care to separate between the corn and chaff, which was the thing he designed in sifting them. (1.) The righteous ones among them that are as the solid wheat, shall none of them perish; they shall be delivered either from or through the common calamities of the kingdom; not the least grain shall fall on the earth; so as to be lost and forgotten; not the least stone, so the word is, for the good corn is weighty as a stone, in comparison with that which we call light corn. Note, Whatever shakings there may be in the world, God doth and will effectually provide that none that are truly his shall be truly miserable. (2.) The wicked ones among them that are hardened in their sins, shall all of them perish, ver. 10. See what a height of impiety they are come to, They say, the evil shall not overtake and prevent us. They think they are innocent and do not deserve punishment; or that the profession they make of relation to God will secure them exemption and security from punishment; or, that they shall be able to make their part good against the judgments.



of God, that they shall flee so swiftly from them that they shall not overtake them, or guard so carefully against them, that they shall not prevent or surprise them. Note. Hope of impunity is the deceitful refuge of the repentant. But for what it will come to at last: *all the sinners that thus enter themselves and affront God, shall die by the sword*, the sword of war, which to them shall be the sword of divine vengeance; yea, though they be the *sinners of my people*: for their profession shall not be their protection. Note. Evil is often nearest those that put it at the greatest distance from them.

11. ¶ In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: 12. That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this. 13. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the ploughmen shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth the seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. 14. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 15. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land, which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

To him to whom all the prophets bear witness, this prophet here in the cloth bears his testimony: and speaks of *that day*, *those days* that *shall come* in which God will do great things for his church, by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, for the rejecting of which, the rejection of the Jews was foretold in the foregoing verses. The promise here is said to agree to the planting of the Christian church, and in that to be fulfilled. *Acts* vi. 15, 16, 17.

1. It is promised that in the Messiah, the kingdom of David shall be restored, *ver. 11.* the *tabernacle of David* it is called, i. e. his house and family, which, though great and fixed, yet in comparison with the kingdom of glory is mean and movable as a *tabernacle*. The church militant in this present world, dwelling in *shepherds tents to feed*, as in *foldiers tents to fight*, is the *tabernacle of David*. God's *tabernacle* is called the *tabernacle of David*, because David desired and chose to dwell in God's *tabernacle* forever, *Psalm* lxxi. 1. Now (1.) These tabernacles were *fallen*, and gone to decay, the royal family was so impoverished, its power abridged, its honour slighted and laid in the dust for many of that race degenerated, and in the captivity it lost the imperial dignity: fore *breaches* were made upon it, and at length it was laid in *ruins*. So it was with the church of the Jews, in the latter days of it its glory was departed, it was like a tabernacle broken down and brought to ruin, in respect both of purity and prosperity. (2.) By Jesus Christ these tabernacles were raised and re-built. In him God's covenant with David has its accomplishment, and the glory of that house which was not only fulfilled, but quite sunk, revived again, the *breaches* of it were closed, and its *ruins raised up as in the days of old*; nay the spiritual glory of the family of Christ far exceeded the temporal glory of the family of David, when it was at its height. In him also God's covenant with Israel had its accomplishment, and in the gospel church the *tabernacle of God* was set up among men again, and raised up out of the ruins of the Jewish church. This is quoted in the first council at Jerusalem, as referring to the calling in of the Gentiles, and God's *taking out of them a people for his name*. Note. While the world stands God will have a church in it, and if it be fallen down in one place, and among one people it shall be raised up elsewhere.

2. It is promised that that kingdom shall be enlarged, and the territories of it shall extend far, by the accession of many countries to it, *ver. 12.* That the house of David may possess the *remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen*, i. e. That Christ may have them given him for his inheritance, even the *utmost parts of the earth for his possession*, *Psalm* ii. 8. Those that had been strangers and enemies, shall become willing, faithful subjects to the son of David, shall be added to the church, or those of them that are called by my name, saith the Lord, i. e. that belong to the election of grace, and are ordained to eternal life, *Acts* xiii. 48. for it is true of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, that the *election hath obtained, and the rest were*

*blinded*, *Rom.* vii. 7. Christ is *to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad*, here said to be those that were called by his name: the promise is to do that were *scattered*, even as many of them as the Lord will shall call, *Acts* ii. 21. St. James expounds this as a promise *That the people of men should seek after the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom his name is called*. But may the promise be depended upon? Yes, the Lord *saith this*, who *doeth this*; who can to it, who hath determined to do it, the power of whose grace is engaged for the doing of it; and with whom saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us.

3. That in the kingdom of the Messiah, there shall be great plenty, and abundance of all good things, that the country doth produce, *ver. 13.* The *ploughmen shall overtake the reaper*, i. e. there shall be such a plentiful harvest every year, and so much corn to be gathered in, that it shall last all summer even till autumn, when it is time to begin a new ploughing season; and in like manner the vintage shall continue till *fall time*; and there shall be such abundance of grapes, that even the *mountains shall drop new wine* into the vessels of the grape-gatherers, and the hills that were dry and barren shall be moistened, and shall melt with the *fatness*, or the *richness*, as we call it, of the *fall*. Compare this with *Joel* ii. 24, and *Isa.* 18. There must certainly be understood of the abundance of spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which all these are and shall be blessed with that are in sincerity added to Christ and his church; they shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of God's house, with the graces and comforts of his Spirit; they shall have *bread* the bread of life, to *strengthen their hearts*, and the wine of divine consolations to *make them glad*; *well looked and drunk in due*; all the benefits that come to the souls of men from the Word and Spirit of God, there has been long continued to this church of the Jewish church, divine revelations and the power that attended it were to be felt and only within the measure; but in comparison, the *mountains and hills* of the Christian world shall be enriched, these promises by the gospel of Christ preached and put to use, and received in the power of it. When great multitudes were converted to the faith of Christ, and nations were born at once, when the preachers of the gospel were *not ashamed to triumph* in the face of their persecutors, then the *ploughmen overtook the reaper*; and when the *hills and mountains were covered with their offerings*, and in *all knowledge*, and all manner of *spiritual gifts*, *1 Cor.* i. 5. then the *mountains dropped sweet wine*.

4. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be well peopled, as the country shall be replenished, so shall the cities be: there shall be mouths for this meat, *ver. 14.* Those that were *carried captives* shall be brought back out of their captivity, their enemies shall not be able to devour them in the land of their captivity, nor shall they themselves incline to settle in it, but the *remnant* shall return; and shall *build the waste cities, and inhabit them*, shall form themselves into Christian churches, and set up pure doctrine, worship, and discipline among them, according to the gospel church, by which Christ's cities are incorporated; and shall enjoy the peace and comfort thereof; they shall *plant vineyards, and make gardens*, through the *mountains and hills* drop wine, and the privileges of the gospel church are led in common, yet they shall make for themselves not to *antagonize* the privileges to the exclusion of others, but to *appropriate* and *improve* these privileges in *common* with others, and they shall *drink the wine and eat the fruit of their vineyards, and gardens*; for they shall take pains in religion, as men must do about their vineyards and gardens, they shall have both the pleasure and the profit of it. The bringing again of the captivity of God's Israel, which is here promised, may refer to the cancelling of the ceremonial law, which had been long to God's Israel as a *yoke of bondage*, and the investing of them in the *liberty* wherewith Christ came to make his church free, *Gal.* v. 1.

5. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall take such deep rooting in the world, as never to be rooted out of it, *ver. 15.* I will plant them upon their land, God's spiritual Israel shall be planted, by the right hand of God himself, upon the land assigned them, and they shall no more be pulled up out of it, as the old Jewish church was. God will preserve them from throwing themselves out of it by a total apostacy, and will preserve them from being thrown out of it by the malice of their enemies; the church may be corrupted, but shall not quite forsake God, may be persecuted, but shall not quite be forsaken of God, so that the gates of hell, neither with their temptations, nor with their terrors, shall prevail against it. Two things secure the perpetuity of the church: (1.) God's grants to it. It is the land which I have given them, and God will confirm and maintain his own grants. The part he has given to his people, is that good part which shall never be taken from them, he will not revoke his grant, and all the powers of earth and hell shall not invalidate it. (2.) Its interest in him. He is the Lord thy God who has said it, and will make it good: *Thine O Israel, who shall reign for ever, as thine unto all generations*. And because he lives, the church shall live also.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET AMOS.



# EXPOSITION,

## WITH

### PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

# OBADIAH.

This is the shortest of all the books of the Old Testament; the least of those tribes; and yet is not to be passed by, or thought meanly of; for this *penny* hath *Cæsar's* image and superscription upon it; it is stamped with a divine authority: there may appear much of God in a *short* sermon, in a *little* book; and much good may be done by it; *multum in parvo*. Mr. Norris saith, if angels were to write books we should have few folios: that may be very precious which is not voluminous. This book is entitled, *The Vision of Obadiah*: who this Obadiah was doth not appear from any other scripture; some of the ancients imagined him to be the same with that Obadiah that was steward of Achab's household, 1 *Kings* xviii. 3. and if so, he that hid and fed the prophets, had indeed a prophet's reward when he was himself made a *prophet*. But this is a conjecture which has no ground. This Obadiah, it is probable, was of a later date, some think cotemporary with Hosea, Joel, and Amos; others think he lived about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the children so barbarously triumphed in that destruction. However, what he *wrote* was what he *saw*; it is his *vision*; probably there are much more which he was divinely inspired to *write*, but this is all he was inspired to *write*; and all he writes is concerning Edom. It is a foolish fancy of some of the Jews, that because he prophesies only concerning Edom he was himself an Edomite by birth, but a proselyte to the Jewish religion: other prophets prophesied against Edom, and some of them seem to have borrowed from him in their predictions against Edom as *Jer.* xlix. 7. &c. *Ezek.* xxv. 8. &c. out of the mouth of these two or three witnesses every word will be established.

## CHAP. I.

This book is wholly concerning Edom; a nation near allied and near adjoining to Israel, and yet an enemy to the seed of Jacob, inheriting the enmity of their father Esau to Jacob. Now here we have after the preface, ver. 1. (1.) Threatenings against Edom, (1.) That their pride should be humbled, ver. 2—4. (2.) That their wealth should be plundered, ver. 5—7. (3.) That their wisdom should be frustrated, ver. 8, 9. (4.) That their spiteful carriage towards God's Israel should be avenged, ver. 10—16. (2.) Gracious promises to Israel; that they shall be restored and reformed, and shall be victorious over the Edomites, and become masters of their land, and the lands of other their neighbours, ver. 17—20. And that the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, by the bringing in of the great salvation, ver. 21.

1. **THE** vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD, concerning Edom; we have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. 2. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. 3. ¶ The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? 4. Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD. 5. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? 6. How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hid things sought up! 7. All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread, have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him. 8. Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? 9. And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

Edom is the nation against which this prophecy is levelled, and some think is put for all the enemies of Israel, that shall be brought down first or last; the rabbins by Edom understand Rome, Rome Christian they understand it of, and have an implacable enmity to it as such; but if we understand it of Rome Anti-Christian, we shall find the passages of it applicable enough. And though Edom was mortified in the times of the Macabees, as it had been before by Jehoshaphat, yet its destruction seems to have been typical, as their father Esau's rejection, and to have had further reference to the destruction of the enemies of the gospel church; for so shall all God's enemies perish; and we find, *Ilu.* xxxiv. 5. the sword of the Lord coming down upon Idumea, to signify the general day of God's recompences for the controversy of Zion, ver. 8. Some have well observed, that it could not but be a great temptation to the people of Israel, when they saw themselves, who were the children of beloved Jacob, in trouble, and the Edomites the seed of hated Esau, not only prospering, but triumphing over them in their troubles; and therefore God gives them a prospect of the destruction of Edom, which should be total and final, and of a happy issue of their own correction.

Now we may observe here,

1. A declaration of war against Edom, ver. 1. *We have heard a rumour*, or rather an order from the Lord, the God of hosts, he hath given the word of command, it is his counsel and decree, which can neither be reversed nor resisted, that all that do mischief to his people shall certainly bring mischief upon themselves; we have heard a report that God has raised up out of his holy habitation, and is preparing his throne for judgment; and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, a herald rather, some minister or messenger of providence, to alarm the nations, or the Lord's prophets who gave each nation its burden: those whom God employs cry to each other, *arise ye*, stir up yourselves and one another, and let us rise up against Edom in battle; the confederate forces under Nebuchadnezzar thus animate themselves and one another, to make a descent upon that country; *gather ye together and come against her*, so it is in the parallel place, *Jer.* xlix. 15. Note, When God hath bloody work to do among the enemies of his church, he will find out and sit up both hands and hearts to do it.

2. A prediction of the success of that war; Edom shall certainly be subdued and spoiled and brought down, for all her confidences shall fail her and stand her in no stead, and in like manner shall all the enemies of God's church be disappointed in those things which they stayed themselves upon.

1. Do they depend upon their grandeur, the figure they make among the nations, their influence upon them, and interest in them that shall dwindle? ver. 2. *Behold I have made thee small among the heathen*, so that none of thy neighbours will court thy friendship, or court an alliance with thee, *thou art greatly despised* among them, and looked upon with contempt as an insatuated and unfaithful nation. And thus, ver. 3. *The pride of thine heart has deceived thee*. Note, 1. Those that think well of themselves are apt to fancy that others think well of them too, but when they come to make trial of them, they will find themselves mistaken, and thus their pride deceives them, and by it slays them. 2. God can easily lay those low that have magnified and exalted themselves; and will find out a way to do it, for he *resisteth the proud*; and we often see those *small* and *greatly despised*, who, when time was, looked very big, and were greatly caressed and admired.

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4. Do they depend upon their alliances with neighbouring states and potentates, those also shall fail them, *ver. 7. The men of thy confederacy*, all of them, the Ammonites and the Moabites, and other the high allies that were at *peace with thee*, that entered into a league offensive and defensive with thee, that solemnly engaged not only to do thee no hurt, but to do thee all the service they could; they *did eat thy bread*, were magnificently treated and entertained by thee, lived upon thee, their soldiers had free quarter in thy country, and took pay as thine auxiliaries; they have *brought thee even to the border* of thy land; were very respectful to thine ambassadors, and brought them on their way home, even to the utmost limits of their country; they seemed forward to serve thee with their forces when thou hadst occasion for them, and came along with thee *to the border*, till thou wast just ready to engage the invading enemy; but then, (1.) They have *deceived thee*, they flew back and retreated when thou wast in extremity, and proved as a *broken reed* to the traveller that is *weary*, and as the brooks in summer to the traveller that is *thirsty*; they bear no weight, yield no relief. Nay, (2.) They have *prevailed against thee*; i. e. they were too hard for thee in the treaty imposed upon thee, and by cheating thee ruined thee; brought thee into danger, and there left thee an easy prey to thine enemy. Note, Those that make flesh their arm, arm it against them: Yet this was not the worst. (3.) They have *laid a wound under thee*, i. e. They have laid that under thee for a stay and support, for a foundation to *rely on*, for a pillow to *repose on*, which will prove a *wound to thee*; not as thorus only, but as swords. If God *lay under us* the arms of his power and love, these will be firm and easy under us, the God of our covenant will never deceive us; but if we trust to the *men of our confederacy*, and what they will lay under us, it may prove to us a *wound and dishonour*. And observe, the just censure here passed upon Edom for trusting to those who thus played tricks with him, *there is no understanding in him*, or else he would never have put it into their power to betray him by putting such a confidence in them. Note, Those shew they have no understanding in them, who, when they are encouraged to trust in the Creator, put a cheat upon themselves by reposing a confidence in the creature.

5. Do they depend upon the politics of their counsellors; these shall fail them, *ver. 8. Edom had been famous for great statemen*, men of learning and experience, that sat at the helm of government, and were masters of all the arts of management; that in all treaties used to outwit their neighbours; but now the *counsellors* are become *fools*, and the wise God makes them so; *shall I not in that day destroy the wise men out of Edom?* As men they shall fall by the sword in common with others. *Psal. xlix. 10.* and their wisdom shall not secure them; as *wise men* they shall be *infatuated* in all their counsels, their best laid designs shall be baffled, their measures broken, and those very projects by which they ought to establish themselves and the public interests, shall be the ruin of both. Thus *wisdom perisheth from Teman*, as it is in the parallel place, *Jer. xlix. 7.* This was, (1.) The just punishment of their folly in trusting to an arm of flesh; *there is no understanding in them*, *ver. 7.* They have not sense to trust in a living God and God of truth, but put confidence in men that are frail, sickle and false, and therefore God will *destroy their understanding*. Note, God will justly deny those understanding to keep out of the way of sin. He that will be foolish let him be foolish still. (2.) It was the forerunner of their destruction. A nation is then marked for ruin when God hides the things that belong to its peace from the eyes of those that are intrusted with its counsels. *Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat.* Job xlii. 17.

6. Do they depend upon the strength and courage of their soldiers? They are not only able-bodied, but men of spirit and courage, that can face an enemy, and stand their ground; but now, *ver. 9. Thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed*, their courage shall fail them, *to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter*, and none escape; the weak and feeble and unarmed must fall of course into the hand of the destroyer, when the *mighty men are dismayed*, and not only lose the day, but lose their lives, because they have *lost their spirit*. *Howe fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken.* Note, The death or disuniting of the mighty often proves the death and destruction of the many; and it is in vain to depend upon mighty men for our protection, if we have not an almighty God for us, much less if we have an almighty God against us.

10. ¶ For *thy violence against thy brother Jacob* shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. 11. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. 12. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother, in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. 13. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; 14. Neither shouldest thou have stood in the cross-way, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. 15. For the

day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. 16. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

When we have read Edom's doom, no less than utter ruin, it is natural to ask, *Why, what evil hath he done?* what is the ground of God's controversy with him? Many things, no doubt, were amiss in Edom, they were a sinful people, and a people laden with iniquity! but that one single crime which is laid to their charge, as filling their measure, and bringing this ruin upon them, that for which they here stand indicted, of which they are convicted, and for which they are condemned, is the injuries and wrongs they had done to the people of God; *ver. 10. It is for thy violence against thy brother Jacob*, that ancient and hereditary grudge which thou hast borne to the people of Israel, that is it for which all this *shame shall cover thee*, and *thou shalt be cut off for ever*. Note, Injuries to men are affronts to God, the righteous God that loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness; and, as the judge of all the earth, he will do right for those that suffer wrong, and take vengeance on those that do wrong. All *violence*, all *unrighteousness* is sin, but it is a great aggravation of the *violence*, if it be done either, (1.) Against any of our own people; it is *violence against thy brother*; thy near relation, to whom thou shouldest be a God, a redeemer, whom it is thy duty to *right*, if others wronged him; how wicked is it then for thee thyself to wrong him! thou *standest* and abusest thine *own mother's son*, this makes the sin *exceeding sinful*, *Psal. l. 20.* Or, (2.) Much more if it be done against any of God's people; it is thy brother Jacob, that is in covenant with God, and dear to him. Thou hatest him whom God has loved, and because God hath loved him: him whose cause God espouseth, and will plead with jealousy; and in whose interests God is pleased so far to interest himself, as that he takes the violence done to him as done to himself; *whoso toucheth Jacob, toucheth the apple of the eye of Jacob's God*. So that it is *crimen læsæ majestatis*; for which, as for high treason, let Edom expect an ignominious punishment; *shame shall cover thee*, as a ruining one, *thou shalt be cut off for ever*.

In the following verses we are told more particularly,

1. What the *violence* was which Edom did against his brother Jacob, and what are the *proofs* of this charge. It doth not appear that the Edomites did themselves invade Israel, but that was more for want of power than will, they had malice enough to do it, but were not a match for them; but that which is laid to their charge is, their barbarous carriage towards Judah and Jerusalem, when they were in distress and ready to be destroyed, probably by the Chaldeans; or upon occasion of other the calamities of the Jews; for this seems to have been always their temper towards them. See this charged upon the Edomites, *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* that *in the day of Jerusalem they said, Rase it, rase it, and Ezek. xxv. 12.* They are here told particularly what they did, by being told what they *should not have done*, *ver. 12, 13, 14. thou shouldest not have looked, thou shouldest not have entered*; but thou didst do so. Note, In reflecting upon ourselves it is good to compare what we *have done* with what we *should have done*, our practice with the rule, that we may discover wherein we have done amiss, *have done those things which we ought not to have done*; we *should not* have been where we were at such a time, *should not* have been in such and such company, *should not* have said what we said, nor have taken the liberty that we took. Sin thus looked upon in the glass of the commandment, will appear *exceeding sinful*. Let us see,

1. What was the case of Judah and Jerusalem when the Edomites behaved themselves thus basely, and insulted over them. (1.) It was a *day of distress* with them, *ver. 12.* it was the *day of their calamity*, so it is called three times, *ver. 13.* with the Edomites it was a day of prosperity and peace, when with the Israelites it was a day of distress and calamity, for *judgment* commonly *begins at the house of God*. Children are corrected when strangers are let alone. (2.) It was the day of *their destruction*, *ver. 12.* when both city and country were laid waste, were laid in ruins. (3.) It was a day when *foreigners entered into the gates of Jerusalem*, when the city, after a long siege was broken up, and the great officers of the king of Babylon's army came and sat in the gates, as judges of the land; when they cast lots upon the spoils of Jerusalem, as the soldiers on Carthage's garments, what shares each of the conquerors shall have; what share of the lands, what share of the goods; or, *cast lots* to determine themselves when and where they should attack it. (4.) It was a day when the *stranger carried away captive his forces*, *ver. 11.* took the men of war *prisoners* of war, and carried them off in *poverty* and *shame* to their own country: Or such a multitude of captives that they were as an army. (5.) It was a day when thy brother himself that had long been at home, at rest in his own land, *became a stranger*, an exile in a strange land. Now when this was the woeful case of the Jews, the Edomites their neighbours and brethren should have pitied them and helped them, consoled them and comforted them; and should have trembled to think that their own turn would come next: for if *this were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

But 2. See what was the carriage of the Edomites towards them when they were in this distress, for which they are here condemned. (1.) They looked with *pleasure* upon the affliction of God's people; they *stood on the other side*, *ver. 11.* afar off, when they should have come in to the relief of their distressed neighbours, and *looked upon them*, and *their day looked on their affliction*, *ver. 12, 13.* with a careless unconcerned eye, as the priest and Levite looked upon the wounded man, and *passed by on the other side*; those have a great deal to answer for, that are *idle spectators* of the troubles and afflictions of their neighbours, when they are capable of being their active helpers. But this was not all, they looked upon it with a scornful eye, with an eye of complacency and satisfaction; they looked and *laughed* to see Israel in distress, saying, *aha, so would we have it*: they set their eyes with the rueful spectacle of Jerusalem's ruins, and *looked at it*, as those that had long looked for it and often wished to see it. Note, We must take heed with what eye we look upon the afflictions of our brethren, and if we cannot look upon them with a gracious eye of sympathy and tenderness, it is better not to look upon them at all. *Thou shouldest not have looked* as thou didst *upon the day of thy brother*. (2.) They triumphed and insulted over them, upbraided their brethren with their sorrows, and made themselves and their companions merry with them. They *rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction*; they had not the good manners to conceal the pleasure they took in Judah's destruction, and to dissemble it, but *openly* declared it, and *rudely* and innocently declared it to them, they *rejoiced over them*, crowed and hector'd and trampled upon them. Those have the spirit of Edomites, that can rejoice over any, especially over Israelites, in the day of their calamity. (3.) They *spoke proudly, magnified the mouth*, so the word is, against Israel; talked with a great disdain of the suffering Israelites,



## EXPOSITION,

WITH

## PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

## OBADIAH.

This is the shortest of all the books of the Old Testament; the least of those tribes; and yet is not to be passed by, or thought meanly of; for this *penny* hath *Cæsar's* image and superscription upon it; it is stamped with a divine authority: there may appear much of God in a *short* sermon, in a *little* book; and much good may be done by it; *multum in parvo*. Mr. Norris saith, if angels were to write books we should have few folios: that may be very precious which is not voluminous. This book is entitled, *The Vision of Obadiah*: who this Obadiah was doth not appear from any other scripture; some of the ancients imagined him to be the same with that Obadiah that was steward of Achab's household, 1 *Kings* xviii. 3. and if so, he that hid and fed the prophets, had indeed a prophet's reward when he was himself made a prophet. But this is a conjecture which has no ground. This Obadiah, it is probable, was of a later date, some think cotemporary with Hosea, Joel, and Amos; others think he lived about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the children so barbarously triumphed in that destruction. However, what he *wrote* was what he *saw*; it is his *vision*: probably there are much more which he was divine'y inspired to *speake*, but this is all he was inspired to *write*; and all he writes is concerning Edom. It is a foolish fancy of some of the Jews, that because he prophesies only concerning Edom he was himself an Edomite by birth, but a proselyte to the Jewish religion: other prophets prophesied against Edom, and some of them seem to have borrowed from him in their predictions against Edom as *Jer.* xlix. 7. &c. *Ezek.* xxv. 8. &c. out of the mouth of these two or three witnesses every word will be established.

## C H A P. I.

This book is wholly concerning Edom; a nation near allied and near adjoining to Israel, and yet an enemy to the seed of Jacob, inheriting the enmity of their father Esau to Jacob. Now here we have after the preface, ver. 1. (1.) Threatenings against Edom, (1.) That their pride should be humbled, ver. 2—4. (2.) That their wealth should be plundered, ver. 5—7. (3.) That their wisdom should be insatuated, ver. 8, 9. (4.) That their spiteful carriage towards God's Israel should be avenged, ver. 10—16. (2.) Gracious promises to Israel; that they shall be restored and reformed, and shall be victorious over the Edomites, and become masters of their land, and the lands of other their neighbours, ver. 17—20. And that the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, by the bringing in of the great salvation, ver. 21.

1. **T**HE vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD, concerning Edom; we have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. 2. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. 3. ¶ The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that faith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? 4. Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD. 5. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? 6. How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hid things fought up! 7. All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: thy men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread, have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him. 8. Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? 9. And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

Edom is the nation against which this prophecy is levelled, and some think is put for all the enemies of Israel, that shall be brought down first or last; the rabbins by Edom understand Rome, Rome Christian they understand it of, and have an implacable enmity to it as such; but if we understand it of Rome Anti-Christian, we shall find the passages of it applicable enough. And though Edom was mortified in the times of the Maccabees, as it had been before by Jehoshaphat, yet its destruction seems to have been typical, as their father Esau's rejection, and to have had further reference to the destruction of the enemies of the gospel church; for so shall all God's enemies perish; and we find, *Ipsa* xxxiv. 5. the sword of the Lord coming down upon Idumea, to signify the general day of God's recompences for the controversy of Zion, ver. 8. Some have well observed, that it could not but be a great temptation to the people of Israel, when they saw themselves, who were the children of beloved Jacob, in trouble, and the Edomites the seed of hated Esau, not only prospering, but triumphing over them in their troubles; and therefore God gives them a prospect of the destruction of Edom, which should be total and final, and of a happy issue of their own correction.

Now we may observe here,

1. A declaration of war against Edom, ver. 1. *We have heard a rumour*, or rather an order from the Lord, the God of hosts, he hath given the word of command, it is his counsel and decree, which can neither be reversed nor resisted, that all that do mischief to his people shall certainly bring mischief upon themselves; we have heard a report that God has raised up out of his holy habitation, and is preparing his throne for judgment; and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, a herald rather, some minister or messenger of providence, to alarm the nations, or the Lord's prophets who gave each nation its burden: those whom God employs cry to each other, *arise ye*, stir up yourselves and one another, and let us rise up against Edom in battle; the confederate forces under Nebuchadnezzar thus animate themselves and one another, to make a descent upon that country; *gather ye together and come against her*, so it is in the parallel place, *Jer.* xlix. 15. Note, When God hath bloody work to do among the enemies of his church, he will find out and fit up both hands and hearts to do it.

2. A prediction of the success of that war; Edom shall certainly be subdued and spoiled and brought down, for all her confidences shall fail her and stand her in no stead, and in like manner shall all the enemies of God's church be disappointed in those things which they stayed themselves upon.

1. Do they depend upon their grandeur, the figure they make among the nations, their influence upon them, and interest in them that shall dwindle? ver. 2. *Behold I have made thee small among the heathen*, so that none of thy neighbours will court thy friendship, or court an alliance with thee, thou art greatly despised among them, and looked upon with contempt as an insatuated and unfaithful nation. And thus, ver. 3. *The pride of thine heart has deceived thee*. Note, 1. Those that think well of themselves are apt to fancy that others think well of them too, but when they come to make trial of them, they will find themselves mistaken, and thus their pride deceives them, and by it slays them. 2. God can easily lay those low that have magnified and exalted themselves; and will find out a way to do it, for he resisteth the proud; and we often see those small and greatly despised, who, when time was, looked very big, and were greatly carested and admired.

2. Do they depend upon the fortifications of their country both by nature and art, and glory in the advantages they have thereby? Those also shall deceive them. They dwell in the clefts of the rock, as an eagle in her nest, and their habitation was high, not only exalted above their neighbours, which was the matter of their pride, but fortified against their enemies, which was the matter of their security, so high as to be out of the reach of danger. Now observe, (1.) What Edom saith in the pride of his heart; *Who shall bring me down to the ground?* He speaks with a confidence of his own strength, and a contempt of God's judgments, as if almighty power itself could not overpower him. As for all his enemies, even God himself, he puffeth at them, *Psal.* x. 5. sets them all at defiance. Their father Esau had sold his birth right, and yet they lift up themselves, as if to them had still pertained the excellency of dignity and power: Many forfeit their privileges, and yet boast of them. Because Edom is high and lifted up, he imagines none can bring him down: Note, Carnal security is a sin that most easily begets men in the day of their pomp, power, and prosperity; and doth as much as any thing both ripen men for ruin and aggravate it when it comes. (2.) What God saith to this, ver. 4. If men will dare to challenge omnipotence, their challenge shall be taken up: *who shall bring me down?* saith Edom, *I will*, saith God; *though thou exalt thyself as the eagle*; that soars high, and builds high; nay, *though thou set thy nest among the stars*, higher than ever any eagle flew, it is but in thine own imagination, and thence will I bring thee down. This we had, *Jer.* xlix. 15, 16. Note, Sinners will certainly be made ashamed of their pride and security, of their pride when it has a fall, and of their security when their confidences fail their expectation.

3. Do they depend upon their wealth and treasure, the abundance of which is looked upon as the sinews of war? is their money their defence? is that their strong city? It is so but in their own conceit, for it shall rather expose them than protect them; it shall be made a prey to the enemy, and they for the sake of it, ver. 5, 6. much to this purpose we had, *Jer.* xlix. 9, 10. only here comes in a parenthesis, (*How art thou cut off?*) thou and all thy stores: The prophet foretels it, but laments it, that the thread of their prosperity was cut off; how art thou fallen, and how great is thy fall? *How art thou stupified!* to the Chaldee words it: How senseless art thou under these desolating judgments, as if they were but common strokes, but he shews that it should be an utter ruin, not an usual calamity; for (1.) It is indeed



indeed an *usual calamity* for those that have wealth to have it stolen; and to lose a *little* out of their *great deal*. *Thieves came to them* (for where the carcass is there will the birds of prey be gathered together) *robbers come by night*, and they steal *till they have enough*, what they have occasion for, what they have a mind for; they steal no more than they think they can carry away; and out of a great flock it is scarce missed: Those that rob orchards or vineyards carry off what they think fit, but they *leave some grapes*, some fruit for the owner, who easily bears his loss perhaps, and soon recruits it: but, (2.) It shall not be so with Edom, his wealth shall all be taken away, and nothing shall escape the hands of the destroying army, not that which is most precious and valuable, *ver. 6. How are the things of Esau*, the things he sets his heart upon and placeth his happiness in, his *good things*, his *best things*, how are these things which were so carefully treasured up, and concealed, now *searched out* by the enemy and seized? *How are his hid things*, his hid treasures plundered, rifled, and *fought up*? his hoards, that had not been the light of many years, are now a spoil to the enemy. Note, Treasures on earth, though never so fast locked up, and never so artfully hidden, yet cannot be so safely laid up, but that thieves may break through and steal; it is therefore our wisdom to *lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven*.

4. Do they depend upon their alliances with neighbouring states and potentates, those also shall fail them, *ver. 7. The men of thy confederacy*, all of them, the Ammonites and the Moabites, and other the high allies that were at *peace with thee*, that entered into a league offensive and defensive with thee, that solemnly engaged not only to do thee no hurt, but to do thee all the service they could; they *did eat thy bread*, were magnificently treated and entertained by thee, lived upon thee, their soldiers had free quarter in thy country, and took pay as thine auxiliaries; they have *brought thee even to the border* of thy land; were very respectful to thine ambassadors, and brought them on their way home, even to the utmost limits of their country; they seemed forward to serve thee with their forces when thou hadst occasion for them, and came along with thee *to the border*, till thou wast just ready to engage the invading enemy; but then, (1.) They have *deserted thee*, they flew back and retreated when thou wast in extremity, and proved as a *broken reed* to the traveller that is *weary*, and as the brooks in summer to the traveller that is *thirsty*; they bear no weight, yield no relief. Nay, (2.) They have *prevailed against thee*; i. e. they were too hard for thee in the treaty imposed upon thee, and by cheating thee ruined thee: brought thee into danger, and there left thee an easy prey to thine enemy. Note, Those that make flesh their arm, arm it against them: Yet this was not the worst. (3.) They have *laid a wound under thee*, i. e. They have laid that under thee for a stay and support, for a foundation to *rely on*, for a pillow to *repose on*, which will prove a *wound to thee*; not as thorns only, but as swords. If God lay under us the arms of his power and love, these will be firm and easy under us, the God of our covenant will never deceive us; but if we trust to the men of our confederacy, and what they will lay under us, it may prove to us a *wound and dishonour*. And observe, the just censure here passed upon Edom for trusting to those who thus played tricks with him, *there is no understanding in him*, or else he would never have put it into their power to betray him by putting such a confidence in them. Note, Those stew they have no understanding in them, who, when they are encouraged to trust in the Creator, put a cheat upon themselves by reposing a confidence in the creature.

5. Do they depend upon the politics of their counsellors; these shall fail them, *ver. 8. Edom had been famous for great statesmen*, men of learning and experience, that sat at the helm of government, and were masters of all the arts of management; that in all treaties used to outwit their neighbours; but now the *counsellors are become fools*, and the wife God makes them so; *shall I not in that day destroy the wise men out of Edom?* As men they shall fall by the sword in common with others. *Psal. xlix. 10.* and their wisdom shall not secure them: as *wise men* they shall be *infatuated* in all their counsels, their best laid designs shall be baffled, their measures broken, and those very projects by which they ought to establish themselves and the public interests, shall be the ruin of both. Thus *Edom perisheth from Teman*, as it is in the parallel place, *Jer. xlix. 7.* This was, (1.) The just punishment of their folly in trusting to an arm of flesh; *there is no understanding in them*, *ver. 7.* They have not come to trust in a living God and God of truth, but put confidence in men that are frail, sickle and fall; and therefore God will *destroy their understanding*. Note, God will justly deny those understanding to keep out of the way of sin. He that will be foolish let him be foolish fail. (2.) It was the forerunner of their destruction. A nation is then marked for ruin when God hides the things that belong to its peace from the eyes of those that are intrusted with its counsels. *Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat.* Job xiii. 17.

6. Do they depend upon the strength and courage of their soldiers? They are not only able-bodied, but men of spirit and courage, that can face an enemy, and stand their ground; but now, *ver. 9. Thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed*, their courage shall fail them, *to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter*, and none escape; the weak and feeble and unarmed must fall of course into the hand of the destroyer, when the *mighty men are dismayed*, and not only lose the day, but lose their lives, because they have lost their spirit. *Howl fir-trees, if the cedars be plucked.* Note, The death or disuniting of the mighty often proves the death and destruction of the many; and it is in vain to depend upon mighty men for our protection, if we have not an almighty God for us, much less if we have an almighty God against us.

10. ¶ For *thy violence against thy brother Jacob* shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. 11. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. 12. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother, in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. 13. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; 14. Neither shouldest thou have stood in the cross-way, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. 15. For the

day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. 16. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

When we have read Edom's doom, no less than utter ruin, it is natural to ask, *What, what evil hath he done?* what is the ground of God's controversy with him? Many things, no doubt, were amiss in Edom, they were a sinful people, and a people laden with iniquity; but that one single crime which is laid to their charge, as filling their measure, and bringing this ruin upon them, that for which they here stand indicted, of which they are convicted, and for which they are condemned, is the injuries and wrongs they had done to the people of God; *ver. 10. It is for thy violence against thy brother Jacob*, that ancient and hereditary grudge which thou hast borne to the people of Israel, that is it for which all this *shame shall cover thee*, and *thou shalt be cut off for ever*. Note, Injuries to men are affronts to God, the righteous God that loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness; and, as the judge of all the earth, he will do right for those that suffer wrong, and take vengeance on those that do wrong. All violence, all unrighteousness is sin, but it is a great aggravation of the violence, if it be done either, (1.) Against any of our own people; it is violence against thy brother; thy near relation, to whom thou shouldest be a God, a redeemer, whom it is thy duty to right, if others wronged him; how wicked is it then for thee thyself to wrong him! thou *flaunted* and *abused* thine *own mouth* &c. *sin*, this makes the sin exceeding sinful, *Psal. l. 20.* Or, (2.) Much more if it be done against any of God's people; it is thy brother Jacob, that is in covenant with God, and dear to him. Thou hated him whom God has loved, and because God hath loved him; but whose cause God espouseth, and will plead with jealousy; and in whose rescue God is pleased to be so interested himself, as that he takes the violence done to him due to himself; *relaps toucheth Jacob, toucheth the upper of the eyes of the LORD.* So that it is *crimen læsæ majestatis*; for which, as for such a crime, he hath been exacting an ignominious punishment; *Edom shall not be, as a reigning one, thou shalt be cut off for ever.*

In the following verses we are told how they did it.

1. What the offence was which provoked God to his brother Jacob, and what are the proofs of this charge. It doth not appear that the Edomites did themselves invade Israel, but that was more for want of power than will; they had malice enough to do it, but were not a match for them; but that which is laid to their charge is, their barbarous carriage towards Judah and Jerusalem, when they were in distress and ready to be destroyed, probably by the Chaldeans; or upon occasion of other the calamities of the Jews; for this seems to have been always their temper towards them. See this charged upon the Edomites, *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* that in the day of Jerusalem they said, *Raise it, raise it, and Bala. xxv. 12.* They are here told particularly that they did, by being told what they *should not have done*, *ver. 12. 13. 14.* thou *shouldest not have looked*, thou *shouldest not have entered*; but thou didst do so. Note, In reflecting upon ourselves it is good to compare what we have done with what we *should have done*, our practice with the rule, that we may discover wherein we have done amiss, have *done those things which we ought not to have done*; we *should not* have been where we were at such a time, *should not* have been in such and such company, *should not* have said what we said, nor have taken the liberty that we took. Sin thus looked upon in the glass of the commandment, will appear *exceeding sinful*. Let us see,

1. What was the case of Judah and Jerusalem when the Edomites behaved themselves thus basely, and insulted over them. (1.) It was a *day of distress* with them, *ver. 12.* it was the *day of their calamity*, so it is called three times, *ver. 13.* with the Edomites it was a day of prosperity and peace, when with the Israelites it was a day of distress and calamity, for judgment commonly begins at the house of God. Children are corrected when strangers are let alone. (2.) It was the *day of their destruction*, *ver. 12.* when both city and country were laid waste, were laid in ruins. (3.) It was a day when *foreigners entered into the gates of Jerusalem*, when the city, after a long siege was broken up, and the great overthrow, the king of Babylon's army came and sat in the gates, as judges of the land; when they cast lots upon the spoils of Jerusalem, as the soldiers on Carthage's garments, what shares each of the conquerors should have; what share of the lands, what share of the goods; or, *cast lots* to determine themselves when and where they should attack it. (4.) It was a day when the *stranger carried away captive his forces*, *ver. 11.* took the men of war *prisoners* of war, and carried them off in *poverty and shame* to their own country; Or such a multitude of captives that they were as an army. (5.) It was a day when thy brother himself that had long been at home, at rest in his own land, became a *stranger*, an exile in a strange land. Now when this was the woeful case of the Jews, the Edomites their neighbours and brethren should have pitied them and helped them, consoled them and comforted them; and should have trembled to think that their own men would come next: for if *this were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

But 2. See what was the carriage of the Edomites towards them when they were in this distress, for which they are here condemned. (1.) They looked with *pleasure* upon the affliction of God's people; they *stood on the other side*, *ver. 11.* afar off, when they should have come in to the relief of their distressed neighbours, and *looked upon them*, and *their day looked on their affliction*, *ver. 12, 13.* with a careless unconcerned eye, as the priest and Levite looked upon the wounded man, and *passed by on the other side*; those have a great deal to answer for, that are *idle spectators* of the troubles and afflictions of their neighbours, when they are capable of being their active helpers. But this was not all, they looked upon it with a scornful eye, with an eye of complacency and satisfaction; they looked and *laughed* to see Israel in distress, saying, *aha, so would we have it*; they fed their eyes with the rueful spectacle of Jerusalem's ruins, and *looked at it*, as those that had long looked for it and often wished to see it. Note, We must take heed with what eye we look upon the afflictions of our brethren, and if we cannot look upon them with a gracious eye of sympathy and tenderness, it is better not to look upon them at all. *Thou shouldest not have looked* as thou didst *upon the day of thy brother*. (2.) They triumphed and insulted over them, upbraided their brethren with their sorrows, and made themselves and their companions merry with them. *They rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction*; they had not the good manners to conceal the pleasure they took in Judah's destruction, and to dissimble it, but *openly* declared it, and *rudely* and innocently declared it to them, they *rejoiced over them*, crowed and hectored and trampled upon them. Those have the spirit of Edomites, that can rejoice over any, especially over Israelites, in the day of their calamity. (3.) They *spoke proudly, magnified the mouth*, to the word is, against Israel; talked with a great disdain of the suffering Israelites,



Israelites, and with an air of haughtiness of the present safety and prosperity of Edom: as if it might be inferred from their present different state that the tables were turned, and now Esau were below, and the favourite of heaven, and Jacob hated and rejected. Note, Those must expect to be some way or other effectually humbled and mortified themselves, that are puffed up and made proud by the humiliations and mortifications of others.

(4.) They went further yet, for they *entered into the gate* of God's people, in the day of their calamity, and *laid hands on their substance*; though they did not help to conquer them, they helped to plunder them, and put in for a share in the prey, *ver. 13.* Jerusalem was thrown open, and then they entered it; its wealth was thrown about, and they seized it for themselves, excusing it with this, that they had as good take it, as let it be lost; whereas it was taking what was not *their own*. Babylon lays Jerusalem waste, but Edom by meddling with the spoil becomes *particeps criminis*, and shall be reckoned with as an accessory *ex post facto*. Note, Those do but impoverish themselves that think to enrich themselves by the ruins of the people of God; and those deceive themselves who think they may call all that substance their own, which they can lay their hands on, in a day of calamity. (5.) They did yet worse things, they not only robbed their brethren, but murdered them in the day of their calamity; *laid hands* not only on their substance but on their persons, *ver. 14.* When the victorious sword of the Chaldeans was making bloody work among the Jews, they made their escape, and were in a fair way to save themselves by flight, but the Edomites basely intercepted them, *stood in the cross-way* where several roads met, by each of which the trembling Israelites were making the best of their way from the fury of the pursuers, and there they stopped them: some they barbarously and coward-like cut off themselves; others they took prisoners, and delivered up to the pursuers, only to ingratiate themselves with them, because they were now the conquerors. They should not have been thus cruel to them that lay at their mercy, and never had done, nor were ever likely to do them any hurt; *should not have betrayed* those whom they had such a fair opportunity to protect; but such are the tender mercies of the wicked. One cannot read this without a high degree of compassion towards those that were thus basely abused, that when they fled from the sword of an open enemy, and thought they were got out of the reach of it, fell upon and fell by the sword of a treacherous neighbour, that they were not apprehensive of any danger from; nor without a high degree of indignation towards those that were so perfectly lost to all humanity, as to exercise such cruelty upon such proper objects of compassion. (6.) In all this they joined with the open enemies and persecutors of Israel; *even thou wast as one of them*, an accessory equally guilty with the principals. He that joins in with evil doers, and is aiding and abetting in their evil deeds, shall be reckoned, and shall be reckoned with as one of them.

2. What the *flame* is that shall cover them for this violence of theirs. (1.) They shall soon find that the cup is going round even the cup of trembling, and when they come to be in the same calamitous condition that the Israel of God is now in, they will be ashamed to remember how they triumphed over them, *ver. 15.* The day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen, when God will recompence tribulation to the troublers of his church. Though judgment begin at the house of God it shall not end there. This should effectually restrain us from triumphing over others in their misery, that we know not how soon it may be our own case. (2.) Their enmity to the people of God, and the injuries they have done them shall be recompensed into their own bosoms. *As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee*; the righteous God will render both to nations and to particular persons according to their works: and the punishment is often made exactly to answer the sin; and those that have abused others, come to be themselves abused in like manner. The just and jealous God will find out a time and way to avenge the wrongs done to his people, on those that have been injurious to them. And, *ver. 16.* As ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, i. e. as God's professing people who inhabit his holy mountain, have drunk deep of the cup of affliction, and their being of the holy mountain would not excuse them, so shall all the heathen drink, in their turn, of the same bitter cup; for if God bring evil on the city that is called by his name, shall they be unpunished that never knew his name? See *Jer. xxv. 29.* And it is part of the burden of Edom, *Jer. xlix. 12.* They whose judgment was not to drink out of the cup, i. e. who had reason to promise themselves an exemption from it, have assuredly drunken and shall Edom go unpunished, that is the generation of God's wrath? No, *thou shalt surely drink of it; the cup of trembling shall be taken out of the hand of God's people, and put into the hand of them that afflict them, Isa. li. 22, 23.* Nay they may expect their case to be worse in the day of their distress, than that of Israel was in their day; for, (1.) The afflictions of God's people were but for a moment, and soon had an end; but their enemies shall drink continually the wine of God's wrath, *Rev. xiv. 10.* (2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked of the earth, *Psal. lxxv. 8.* they shall drink and swallow down, or sip up, as the margin reads it, shall drink it to the bottom. (3.) The people of God, though they may be made to drink of the wine of affliction for a while, *Psal. lx. 3.* yet they shall recover it, and come to themselves again; but the heathen shall drink and be as though they had not been, i. e. there shall be neither any remains, nor any remembrance of them, but they shall be wholly extirpated and rooted out. So let all thine enemies perish O Lord, so they shall perish if they turn not.

17. ¶ But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness: and the house of Jacob, shall possess their possessions. 18. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. 19. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines; and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. 20. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. 21. And saviours shall come upon mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

After the destruction of the church's enemies is threatened, which will be completely accomplished in the great day of recompence, and that judgment for which Christ came once, and will come again into this world:

here follow precious promises of the salvation of the church, with which this prophecy concludes, as those of Joel and Amos did, which however they might be in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of Babylon, notwithstanding the triumphs of Edom in their captivity, as if it were *perpetual* yet doubtless they are to have their full accomplishment in that great salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ, to which all the prophets bore witness. It is promised here,

1. That there shall be *salvation* upon mount Zion, that holy hill where God sets his anointed king, *Psal. ii. 6.* Upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, *ver. 17.* There shall be those that escape; to the margin. A remnant of Israel, upon the holy mountain shall be saved, *ver. 16.* Christ said, *salvation is of the Jews*, *John iv. 22.* God wrought deliverances for the Jews, typical of our redemption by Christ. But mount Zion is the gospel church, from thence the New-Testament law went forth. *Isa. ii. 3.* There salvation shall be preached and prayed for: to the gospel-church those are added that shall be saved; and those who come in faith and hope to this mount Zion, for them deliverance shall be wrought from wrath and the curse, from sin and death, and hell, while those that continue afar off shall be left to perish.

2. That where is *salvation*, there shall be *sanctification* in order to it. And there shall be holiness, to prepare and qualify the children of Zion for this deliverance; for wherever God deluges glory he gives grace. Temporal deliverances are then wrought for us in mercy, when with them there is holiness; when there is wrought in us a disposition to receive them with love and gratitude to God; when we are sanctified they are sanctified to us. Holiness is itself a great deliverance, and an earnest of that eternal salvation which we look for. There upon mount Zion, in the gospel church shall be holiness, for that is it which becomes God's house for ever; and the great design of the gospel and its grace is to plant and promote holiness. There shall be the holy Spirit, the holy ordinances, the holy Jesus, and a select remnant of holy souls, in whom and among whom the holy God will delight to dwell. Note, Where there is holiness, there shall be deliverance.

3. That this salvation and sanctification shall spread and prevail, and get ground in the world. The house of Jacob, even this mount Zion, with the deliverance and the holiness there wrought, shall possess their possessions, i. e. the gospel church shall be set up among the heathen, and shall replenish the earth: the apostles of Christ by their preaching shall gain possession of the hearts of men, for him whose messengers and ministers they are; and when they possess their hearts they shall possess their possessions, for those who have given up themselves to the Lord, give up all they have to him. When Lydia's heart was opened to Christ, her house was open to his ministers. When the Gentile nations became nations of them that were saved, were disciples, walked in the light of the Lord, and brought their glory and honour into the new Jerusalem, *Rev. xxi. 24.* then the house of Jacob possessed their possessions. This is in part fulfilled by the planting of the Christian religion in the world, and shall be fulfilled yet more and more, by the setting up of Christ's throne there where Satan's seat is, and the erecting of the trophies of his victory upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom.

Now here is foretold, (1.) How this possession shall be gained and the opposition given to it got over, *ver. 18.* The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, for their God is and will be a consuming fire; and the house of Esau shall be for stubble, easily devoured and consumed by this fire. This is fulfilled, (1.) In the conversion of multitudes by the grace of Christ; the gospel preached in the house of Jacob and Joseph, and there owned and professed, shall be as a fire and a flame to melt and soften hard hearts, to burn up the dross of sin and corruption, that they may be purified and refined with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning. Christ when he comes shall be as a refiner's fire, *Mal. iii. 1, 2.* (2.) In the confusion of all the impenitent implacable enemies of the gospel of Christ, that oppose it, and do all they can to hinder the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah by it. The gospel-day is a day that burns like an oven, in which all the proud, and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble, *Mal. iv. 1.* Jacob and Joseph shall be as a fire and a flame; for those that meddle with them to do them hurt, will find it is at their peril; they shall be to them as a torch of fire in a sheaf, *Zech. xii. 6.* The word of God in the mouth of his ministers is said to be like fire, and the people as wood, to be devoured by it, *Jer. v. 14.* And the man of sin is to be consumed by the breath of Christ's mouth, *2 Thess. ii. 8.* Those that are not refined as gold by the fire of the gospel, shall be consumed as dross by it; for it will be a favour either of life or death.

When idols and idolatry were abolished, and the wealth and power of the nations were brought into the service of Christ and his gospel, and the spoils of the strong man armed were divided by him that was stronger than he, then the house of Jacob and Joseph devoured the house of Esau, so that there was none of them left remaining. This the Lord spoke by his prophets, and this he did by his apostles. (2.) How far this possession shall extend, *ver. 19, 20.* This is described in Jewish language, which speaks the accessions made to the land of Israel, after the return out of captivity in Babylon. The captivity of this host of Israel, i. e. this host of Israel that has been so long in captivity, and now they are come back are still called the children of the captivity; those shall not only recover their own land, but shall gain ground upon their neighbours adjoining to them; some of whom shall become proselytes, and shall incorporate with the Jews, who by possessing them in a holy communion, possess their land. We must reckon ourselves truly enriched by the conversion of our neighbours to the fear of God, and the faith of Christ, and their coming to join with us in the worship of God. Such an accession to our Christian Communion, we must reckon to be more our wealth and strength, than an accession to our estates. Or the ancient inhabitants of those lands that were carried away into captivity being lost, and never returning to their estates, the children of Israel shall take possession of that which lies next to them; for their numbers shall so increase that their own land shall be too strait for them, and their neighbours estates shall escheat to them *ob defectum sanguinis*. They shall enter upon that which is adjoining to them; The country of Esau shall be possessed by them of the south parts of Canaan, for to them it lies contiguous. They of the plain, on the west of Canaan, which was a champaign country, shall enter upon the land of the Philistines their neighbours. They of Judah, which was the chief of the two returning tribes, shall possess the field of Ephraim and Samaria, which before belonged to the ten tribes; and Benjamin the other tribe, shall possess Gilead on the other side Jordan, which had belonged to the two tribes and a half. The kingdom of Israel shall join with that of Judah, both in civil and sacred interests; and as friends and brethren, shall mutually possess and enjoy one another: And both together shall possess the Canaanites, even to Zarephath, which belongeth to Sidon; and Jerusalem shall possess the cities of the south, even to Sepharad. Thus did the Jews enlarge their borders on all sides. The modern rabbins teach their scholars, by Zarephath and Sepharad, to understand France and Spain, grounding upon this a foolish groundless expectation, that some time or other the Jews shall be masters of these countries; and they call and count the Christians Edomites, over whom they are to have dominion. But the promise here no doubt has a spiritual signification, and had its accomplishment



plishment in the setting up of the Christian church, the gospel Israel, in the world, and shall have its accomplishment more and more in the enlargement of it, and the additions made to it, till the mystical body is completed. When ministers and Christians prevail with their neighbours to come to Christ, to yield themselves to the Lord, they *possess them*. The converts that Abraham made, are said to be the *soul that he had gotten*, Gen. xii. 5. The possession is gained, not *vi & armis*, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; it is by the preaching of the gospel, and the power of divine grace given along with it, that this possession is got and kept.

4. That the kingdom of the Redeemer should be erected and maintained, to the comfort of his loyal subjects, and the terror and shame of all his enemies, ver. 21. *The kingdom shall be the Lord's*, the Lord Christ's; God shall give it him, by putting all things into his hand, all power both in heaven and in earth; *men* shall give it him, by resigning themselves to him as his willing people, and appointing him their head: Now the work of kings is to protect their subjects, and suppress their enemies; and this Christ will do; he will both reward and punish. (1.) The mountain of Zion shall be *saved*; on it *favours shall come*; the preachers of the gospel, who are called *favours*, because their business is to save themselves and those that

hear them; and in this they are *workers together with Christ*, but to little purpose, if he by his grace did not *work together with them*. (2.) The mountain of Esau shall be *judged*; and the same that came as *favours* on mount Zion, shall *judge the mountain of Esau*; for the word of the gospel in their mouth that *saves* believers *judgeth* unbelievers, convinceth and condemns them. Christ's ministers are *favours on mount Zion*, when they preach that he that *believes shall be saved*, but they judge the mount of Esau, when they preach that he that *believeth not shall be damned*, which they are not only commissioned but commanded to do, Mark xvi. 16. And in the course of God's providence his scripture is fulfilled; when God raiseth up friends to the church in her distress, as he raised up judges to deliver Israel of old, Judg. ii. 16. then *favours come on mount Zion*, to save it from being sunk and ruined; and when the enemies of the church are brought down, and their power broken, then is the *mount of Esau judged*; and this shall be done in every age in such a way as God thinks best, we may depend upon it, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, but the church shall prevail against them; for the kingdom shall be the Lord's, the kingdoms of the world shall become his, and he has taken and will take to himself his great power and reign.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET OBADIAH.

# AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

# JONAH.

This book of Jonah, though it be placed here in the midst of the prophetic books of Scripture, yet it is rather a history than a prophecy: one line of prediction there is in it, *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*; the rest of the book is a narrative of the preface to, and the consequences of, that prediction. In the midst of the obscure prophecies before and after this book, wherein are many things dark and hard to be understood, which are puzzling to the learned, and are *strong meat for strong men*, comes in this plain and pleasant story, which is entertaining to the weakest, and *milk for babes*. Probably Jonah was himself the penman of this book, and he, as Moses, and other inspired penmen, records his own faults, which is an evidence that in these writings they designed God's glory and not their own. We read of this same Jonah, 2 Kings xiv. 25. where we find that he was of Gath-hepher in Galilee, in a city that belongs to the tribe of Zebulun; in a remote corner of the land of Israel: For the Spirit, which like the wind *blows where it listeth*, will as easily find out Jonah in Galilee, as Isaiah at Jerusalem. We find also that he was a messenger of mercy to Israel in the reign of Jeroboam the second, for the success of his arms, in the restoring of the coast of Israel, is said to be according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hand of his servant *Jonah the prophet*; Those prophecies were not committed to writing, but this against Nineveh was, chiefly for the sake of the story that depends upon it, and that is recorded chiefly for the sake of Christ, of whom Jonah was a type: it contains also very remarkable instances of human infirmity in Jonah; and of God's mercy both in pardoning repenting sinners, witness Nineveh, and in bearing with repining saints, witness Jonah.

## CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A command given to Jonah to go preach at Nineveh: ver. 1, 2. (2.) Jonah's disobedience to that command, ver. 3. (3.) The pursuit and arrest of him for that disobedience by a storm, in which he was asleep, ver. 4—6. (4.) The discovery of him and his disobedience to be the cause of the storm, ver. 7—10. (5.) The casting of him into the sea, for the stilling of the storm, ver. 11—16. (6.) The miraculous preservation of his life there in the belly of a fish, ver. 17. which was his resurrection for further services.

1. NOW the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2. Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it: for their wickedness is come up before me. 3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

1. The honour God put upon Jonah in giving him a commission to go and prophesy against Nineveh. Jonah signifies a dove, a proper name for all God's prophets, all his people; who ought to be *harmless as doves*; and to mourn as doves for the sins and calamities of the land. His father's name was Amittai, *my truth*: for God's prophets should be *sons of truth*. To him the word of the Lord came, to him it was, so the word signifies; for God's word is a real thing; men's words are but wind, but God's words are substance. He had been before acquainted with the word of the Lord, and knew his voice from that of a stranger, the orders now given him were, *Arise, go to Nineveh that great city*, ver. 2. Nineveh was at this time the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy, an eminent city, Gen. x. 11. a great

city, that great city, forty-eight miles in compass, some make it much more; great is the number of the inhabitants, as appears by the multitude of infants in it, chap. iv. 11. great in wealth, there was no end of its store, Nah. ii. 9. great in power and dominion, it was the city that for some time ruled over the kings of the earth. But great cities, as well as great men, are under God's government and judgment. A great city, and yet a heathen city, without the knowledge and worship of the true God; how many great cities and great nations are there that sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death. This great city was a wicked city, their wickedness is come up before me, their malice, so some read it, their wickedness was presumptuous and they sin with a high hand. It is sad to think what a great deal of sin is committed in great cities, where there are many sinners, who are not only all sinners but making one another sin; their wickedness is come up, that is, it is come to a high degree, to the highest pitch, the measure of it is full to the brim, their wickedness is come up, and then it is time for vengeance to come down: Or, the cry of their wickedness is come up, as that of Sodom, Gen. xviii. 20, 21. It is come up, before me; to my face, so the word is; it is a bold and open affront to God: It is sinning against him, in his sight, therefore Jonah must cry against it; he must witness against their great wickedness, and must warn them of the destruction that was coming upon them for it. God is coming forth against it, and he sends Jonah before to proclaim war, and to sound an alarm, cry aloud, spare not; he must not whisper his message in a corner, but publish it in the streets of Nineveh; he that has ears to hear let him hear what God hath to say by his prophet against that wicked city, when the cry of sin comes up to God, the cry of vengeance comes out against the sinner. He must go to Nineveh, and cry there upon the spot, against the wickedness of it. Other prophets were ordered to send messages to the neighbour nations, and the prophecy of Nahum is particularly the burden of Nineveh, but Jonah must go and carry the message himself: arise quickly, apply thyself to the business with speed and courage, and the resolution that becomes a prophet, arise, and go to Nineveh. Those that go on God's errands, must rise and go; must stir up themselves to the work cut out for them. The prophets were sent first to the lost sleep of the house of Israel yet not to them only; they had the children's bread, but Nineveh eat the crumbs.



2. The dishonour Jonah did to God, in refusing to obey his orders, and to go on the errand on which he was sent, *ver. 3.* But Jonah instead of rising to go to Nineveh, *rose up to flee to Tarshish, to the sea,* not bound for any port, but desirous to get away from the presence of the Lord; and if he might but do that, he cared not whither he went, not as if he thought he could go any whither from under the eye of God's inspection, but from his *special presence*, from the spirit of prophecy, which when it put him upon this work he thought himself haunted with, and coveted to get out of the hearing of; some think Jonah went upon the opinion of some of the Jews, that the spirit of prophecy was confined to the land of Israel, (which in Ezekiel and Daniel was effectually proved to be a mistake) and therefore he hoped he should get clear of it, if he could but get out of the borders of that land. (1.) Jonah would not go to Nineveh to cry against it; either because it was a long and dangerous journey thither, and in a road he knew not; or because he was afraid it would be as much as his life was worth to deliver such an ungrateful message to that great and potent city; he *consulted with flesh and blood*, and declined the embassy, because he could not go with safety; or because he was jealous for the prerogatives of his country, and not willing that any other nation should share in the honour of divine revelation: he feared it would be the beginning of the removal of the kingdom of God from the Jews, to another nation that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. He owns himself, *chap. iv. 2.* that the reason of his aversion to this journey was, *because he foresaw* that the Ninevites would repent, and God would forgive them, and take them into favour, which would be a slur upon the people of Israel, who had been so long a peculiar people to God. (2.) He therefore went to Tarshish; to Tarsus in Cilicia, so some, probably because he had friends and relations there, with whom he hoped for some time to abscond, he went to Joppa, a famous sea-port in the land of Israel, in quest of a ship bound for Tarshish; and there he found one; providence seemed to favour his design and give him an opportunity to escape, we may be out of the way of duty, and yet may meet with a favourable gale. The ready way is not always the right way; he found the ship just ready to weigh anchor, perhaps, and to hoist sail for Tarshish; and so he lost no time, but perhaps therefore he went to Tarshish because he found the ship going thither, otherwise all places were alike to him: he did not think himself out of his way, the way he would go, provided he was not in his way, the way he should go. So he paid the fare thereof, for he would not stick at the charge, so he could but gain his point and get at a distance from the presence of the Lord; he went with them, with the mariners, with the passengers, with the merchants, whoever they were that were going to Tarshish. Jonah forgetting his dignity as well as duty, herded himself with them; and went down into the ship to go with them to Tarshish. See what the best of men are when God leaves them to themselves, and what need we have when the word of the Lord comes to us, to have the Spirit of the Lord come along with the word, to bring every thought within us into obedience to it. The prophet Isaiah owns, that therefore he was not rebellious, neither turned away back, because God not only spake to him but opened his ear; *Isa. l. 5.* Let us learn hence, to *cease from man*, and not to be too confident either of ourselves, or others, in a time of trial, but let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

4. ¶ But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. 6. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. 7. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. 8. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thy occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? 9. And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. 10. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

When Jonah was set on ship-board, and under sail for Tarshish, he thought himself safe enough, but here we find him pursued and overtaken, discovered and convicted as a deserter from God, as one that had run his colours.

1. God sends a pursuivant after him, a mighty tempest in the sea, *ver. 4.* God has the winds in his treasure, *Psal. cxxxv. 7.* and out of these treasures God sent forth, he cast forth, so the word is, with force and violence, a great wind into the sea; even stormy winds fulfil his word, and are often the messengers of his wrath; he gathers the winds in his fist, *Prov. xxx. 4.* where he holds them, and whence he squeezeth them when he pleases, for though as to us the wind blows where it listeth, yet not as to God, but where he directs. The effects of this wind was a mighty tempest; for when the winds rise the waves rise. Note, Sin brings storms and tempests in the soul, in the family, in churches and nations, it is a disquieting, disturbing thing. The tempest prevailed to that degree that the ship was like to be broken, the mariners expected no other, that ship, so some read it, that and no other; that other ships were upon the same sea at the same time, yet it should seem that ship in which Jonah was, was tossed more than any other, and was more in danger: This wind was sent after Jonah to fetch him back again to God and to his duty, and it is a great mercy to be reclaimed and called home when we go astray, though it be by a tempest.

2. The ship's crew were alarmed by this mighty tempest, but Jonah, only, the person concerned, was unconcerned, *ver. 5.* The mariners were affected with their danger, though it was not with them that God had this controversy; (1.) They were afraid; though their business leading them to be very much conversant with dangers of this kind, they used to make light of them, yet now the oldest and stoutest of them began to tremble, being apprehensive that there was something more than ordinary in this tempest, so suddenly did it rise, so strongly did it rage. Note, God can strike a terror upon the most daring, and make even great men and chief

captains call for shelter from rocks and mountains. (2.) They cried every man unto his god; this was the effect of their fear, many will not be brought to prayer till they are frightened to it; he that would learn to pray, let him go to sea; Lord, in trouble have they visited thee. Every man of them prayed, they were not some praying and others reviling; but every man engaged as the danger was general, so was the address to heaven, there was not one praying for them all, but every one for himself. They cried every man to his god, the god of his country or city, or his own tutelary deity, it is a testimony against atheism, that every man had a god, and had the belief of a God; but it is an instance of the folly of paganism, that they had gods many; every man the god he had a fancy for; whereas there can be but one God, there needs be no more. But though they had lost that dictate of the light of nature, that there is but one God, they still were governed by that direction of the law of nature, that God is to be prayed to; should not a people seek unto their God? *Isa. viii. 19.* and that he is especially to be prayed to when we are in distress and danger; call upon me in the time of trouble; is any afflicted? is any frightened? let him pray. (3.) Their prayers for deliverance were seconded with endeavours, and having called upon their gods to help them, they did what they could to help themselves: for that is the rule, help thyself and God will help thee; they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea to lighten it of them; as Paul's mariners in a like case cast forth even the tacklings of the ship, and the wheat, *Acts xxvii. 18, 19—39.* These here were making a trading voyage, as it should seem, and were laden with many goods and merchandizes, by which they hoped to get gain, but now they are content to suffer loss, by throwing them all overboard to save their lives. See how powerful the natural love of life is; skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for it, and shall we not put a like value upon the spiritual life, the life of the soul, reckoning that the gain of all the world cannot countervail the loss of the soul. See the vanity of worldly wealth, and the uncertainty of its continuance with us; riches make themselves wings and flee away; nay, and the case may be such, that we may be under a necessity of making them wings and driving them away, as here: when they could not be kept for the owners thereof but to their hurt, so that they themselves are glad to be rid of them, and sink that which otherwise would sink them; though they have no prospect of ever recovering it: O that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would be willing to part with that wealth, pleasure, and honour, which they cannot keep without making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and ruining their souls for ever! And they that thus quit their temporal interests for the securing of their spiritual welfare, will be unspeakable gainers at last; for what they lose upon those terms, they shall find again to life eternal.

But where is Jonah all this while? One would have expected him busier than any there, but we find him gone down into his cabin, nay, into the hold, between the sides of the ship, and there he lies, and is fast asleep; neither the noise without nor the sense of guilt within waked him. Perhaps for some time before he had avoided sleeping, for fear of God speaking to him again in a dream, and now he imagined himself out of the reach of that danger, he slept so much the satter. Note, Sin is of a stupifying nature, and we are concerned to take heed, lest at any time our hearts be hardened by the deceitfulness of it. It is the policy of Satan, when by his temptations he has drawn men from God and their duty, to rock them asleep in carnal security, that they may not be sensible of their misery and danger. It concerns us all to watch therefore.

3. The master of the ship called Jonah up to his prayers, *ver. 6.* The ship-master came to him, and bid him for shame get up both to pray for life, and prepare for death; he gave him, (1.) A just and necessary chiding, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Here we commend the ship-master, who gave him this reproof, for though he was a stranger to him he was for the present as one of his family; and whoever has a precious soul, we must help as we can to save it from death. We pity Jonah, who needed this reproof; as a prophet of the Lord, if he had been in his place, he might have been reproving the king of Nineveh, but being out of the way of his duty, he doth himself lie open to the reproofs of a sorry ship-master. See how men by their sin and folly diminish themselves and make themselves mean: Yet we must admire God's goodness in sending him this seasonable reproof, for it was the first step towards his recovery; as the crowing of the cock was to Peter. Note, Those that sleep in a storm may well be asked what they mean. (2.) A pertinent word of advice; arise, call upon thy God; we are here crying every man to his god, why dost not thou get up and cry to thine? Art not thou equally concerned with the rest, both in the danger dreaded, and in the deliverance desired. Note, The devotions of others should quicken ours; and those who hope to share in a common mercy, ought in all reason to contribute their quota towards the prayers and supplications that are made for it. In times of public distress, if we have any interest at the throne of grace, we ought to improve it for the public good. And the servants of God themselves have sometimes need to be called and stirred up to this part of their duty. (3.) A good reason for this advice, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. It should seem the many gods they called upon, were considered by them but as mediators between them and the supreme God, and intercessors for them with him, for the ship-master speaks of one God still, from whom he expected relief. To engage prayer he suggests, that the danger was very great and imminent, we are all likely to perish; there is but a step between us and death, and that just ready to be stepped. That yet there was some hopes remaining, that their destruction might be prevented, and we may not perish; while there is life there is hope, and while there is hope there is room for prayer. That it was God only that could effect their deliverance, and it must come from his power and his pity. If he think upon us and act for us we may yet be saved. And therefore to him we must look, and in him we must put our trust, when the danger is never so imminent.

4. Jonah is found out to be the cause of the storm.

1. The mariners observed so much peculiar and uncommon either in the storm itself, or in their own distress by it, that they concluded it was a messenger of divine justice sent to arrest some one of them, that were in that ship, as having been guilty of some enormous crime; judging as the barbarous people, *Acts xxviii. 4.* No doubt one of us is a murderer, or guilty of sacrilege, or perjury, or the like, who is thus pursued by the vengeance of the sea, and it is for his sake that we all suffer. Even the light of nature teaches, that in extraordinary judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against some extraordinary sins and sinners. Whatever evil is upon us at any time, we must conclude there is a cause for it; there is evil done by us, or else this evil would not be upon us; there is a ground for God's controversy.

2. They determined to refer it to the lot, which of them was the criminal that had occasioned this storm. Let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. None of them suspected himself, or said Is it I, Lord, is it I? But they suspected one another, and would find out the man. Note, It is a desirable thing when any evil is upon us, to know for what cause it is upon us, that what is amiss may be amended, and the grievance being redressed the grief may be removed. And in order to this we must look up to heaven, and pray, Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with



with me: That which I see not teach thou me. These mariners desired to know the person that was the *dead weight* in their ship, the *accursed thing*, that one man might *die for the people*, and that the whole ship might not be lost, and that was not only *expedient* but highly *just*. In order to this they *cast lots*, by which they appealed to the judgment of God, to whom *all hearts are open*, and from whom *no secret is hid*, agreeing to acquiesce in his discovery and determination: and to take that for true which the lot spoke; for they knew by the light of nature, what the scripture tells us, that *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord*. Even the heathen looked upon the casting of lots to be a  *sacred thing*, and to be done with seriousness and solemnity, and not to be made a sport of. It is a shame for Christians, if they have not a like reverence for an appeal to providence.

3. The lot fell upon Jonah, who could have saved them this trouble, if he would but have told them what his own conscience told him, *thou art the man*: but as it is usual with criminals, he never confesseth till he finds he cannot help it; till the lot falls upon him. We may suppose there were those in the ship, who upon other accounts, were greater sinners than Jonah, and yet he is the man that the tempest *purposes*, and that the lot *pitcheth upon*; for it is *his own child*, his own servant, that the parent, that the master *corrects*, if they do amiss, others that offend he *leaves to the law*. The storm is sent after Jonah, because God has work for him to do, and it is sent to fetch him back to it. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light concealed sins and sinners; and making manifest that folly which was thought to be hid from the eyes of all living. *God's right hand will find out all his servants that desert him*, as well as *all his enemies* that have designs against him; yea though they flee to the uttermost parts of the sea, or go down to the fides of the ship.

4. Jonah is hereupon brought under examination, before the master and mariners: He was a stranger, none of them could say they knew the prisoner, or had any think to lay to his charge, and therefore must extort a confession from him, and judge him out of his own mouth: and for this there needed no rack, the ship-wreck they were in danger of was sufficient to frighten him, so as to make him tell the truth. Though it was discovered by the lot, that he was the person for whose sake they were thus damaged and exposed, yet they did not fly outrageously upon him, as one would fear they might have done, but calmly and mildly enquired into his case. There is a compassion owing to offenders, when they are discovered and convicted: they gave him no hard words, but tell us, we pray thee, what is the matter? Two things they enquire of, (1.) Whether he would himself own that he was the person for whose sake the storm was sent, as the lot had intimated; tell us, for whose cause this evil is upon us, is it indeed for thy cause? and if so, for what cause? what is the offence for which thou art thus prosecuted? Perhaps the gravity and decency of Jonah's aspect and carriage made them suspect that the lot had missed its man, had missed its mark; and therefore they would not trust it, unless he would himself own his guilt; they therefore beg of him he would satisfy them in this matter. Note, Those that would find out the cause of their troubles, must not only begin but pursue the enquiry, must descend to particulars, and accomplish a diligent search. (2.) What his character was, both as to his calling and as to his country. (1.) They enquire concerning his calling; *What is thine occupation?* This was a proper question to be put to a vagrant. Perhaps they suspected his calling to be such as might bring this trouble upon them; art thou a *diviner*, a *forcerer*, a student in the *black art*? Hast thou been *conjuring* for this wind? Or what business art thou now going on? Is it like Balaam's to curse any of God's people, and is this wind sent to stop thee? (2.) They enquire concerning his country; one asked, *Whence comest thou?* Another not having patience to stay for an answer, to that, asked, *What is thy country?* and a third to the same purpose, *Of what people art thou?* Art thou of the Chaldeans that were noted for divination; or of the Arabians that were noted for steaming? They wish to know of what country he was, that knowing who was the God of his country, they might guess whether he was one that could do them any kindness in this storm.

5. In answer to those interrogatories, Jonah makes a full discovery. (1.) Did they enquire concerning his country? he tells them he is an Hebrew, ver. 9. not only of the nation of Israel, but of their religion which they have received from their fathers. He is an Hebrew, and therefore is the more ashamed to own that he is a criminal; for the sins of Hebrews that make such a profession of religion and enjoy such privileges, are greater than the sins of others, and more exceeding sinful. (2.) Did they enquire concerning his calling, *What is his occupation?* In answer to that, he gives an account of his religion, for that was his calling, that was his occupation, that was it he made a business of, *I fear the Lord Jehovah*, that is the God I worship, the God I pray to, even the God of heaven, the sovereign Lord of all, that has made the sea and the dry land, and has the command of both. Not the God of one particular country, which they enquired after, and such as the gods were that they had been every man calling upon, but the God of the whole earth; who having made both the sea and the dry land makes what work he pleaseth in both, and makes what use he pleaseth of both. This he mentions not only as condemning himself for his folly, in fleeing from the presence of this God, but as designing to bring these mariners from the worship and service of their many gods to the knowledge and obedience of the one only living and true God. When we are among those that are strangers to us, we should do what we can to bring them acquainted with God, by being ready upon all occasions to own our relation to him and our reverence for him. (3.) Did they enquire concerning his crime, for which he is now prosecuted? he owns that he fled from the presence of the Lord, that he was here out-running his duty, and the storm was sent to fetch him back. We have reason to think he told them this with sorrow and shame, justifying God, and condemning himself, and intimating to the mariners what a great God Jehovah is, who could send such a messenger as this tempest was after a runaway servant.

6. We are told what impression this made upon the mariners; *the men were exceedingly afraid*, and justly, for they perceive, (1.) That God is angry, even that God that made the sea and the dry land: this tempest comes from the hand of an offended justice, and therefore they have reason to fear it will go hard with them. Judgments inflicted for some particular sin have a peculiar weight and terror in them. (2.) That God is angry with one that fears and worships him, only for once out-running his work in a particular instance, this made them afraid for themselves: If a prophet of the Lord be thus severely punished for one offence, what will become of us that have been guilty of so many and great, and heinous offences? If the righteous be thus scarcely saved, and for a single act of disobedience thus closely pursued, *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. They said to him, *Why hast thou done this?* If thou fear the God that made the sea and the dry land, why wast thou such a fool as to think thou couldst flee from his presence? what an absurd, unaccountable thing it is! Thus he was reproved, as Abraham by Abimelech, Gen. xx. 16. for if the professors of religion do an ill thing, they must expect to hear it from those that make no such pretension. *Why hast thou done this to us?* So it may be taken; Why hast thou involved us in the prosecution? Note, Those that commit a willful sin, know not how far the mischievous consequences of it may reach, nor what mischief may be done by it.

11. ¶ Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? (for the sea wrought and was tempestuous). 12. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. 13. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land, but they could not, for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. 14. Wherefore they cried unto the LORD and said, We beseech thee, O LORD we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. 15. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging. 16. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. 17. ¶ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

It is plain that Jonah is the man for whose sake this evil is upon them, but the discovery of him to be so was not sufficient to answer the demands of this tempest; they had found him out, but something more was to be done, for still the sea wrought and was tempestuous, ver. 11. and again, ver. 13. it grew more and more tempestuous. To the margin reads it, for if we discover him to be the cause of our trouble and do not to take it, we do but make ill worse. Therefore they go on with the prosecution.

1. They enquire of Jonah himself what he thought they must do with him, ver. 11. *What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm to us?* They perceive that Jonah is a prophet of the Lord, and therefore will not do any thing, no, not in his own case, without consulting him. He appears to be a delinquent, but he appears also to be a penitent, and therefore they would not insult over him, or over him any reproaches. Note, We ought to carry it with great tenderness towards those that are overtaken in a fault, and are brought into distress by it. They would not cast him into the sea, if he could think of any other expedient, by which to save the ship. Or perhaps, thus they would shew how plain the case was, that there was no remedy but he must be thrown overboard; let him be his own judge, as he had been his own accuser, and he himself will say so. Note, When sin has raised a storm, and laid us under the token of God's displeasure, we are concerned to enquire what we shall do that the sea may be calm: and what shall we do? we must pray and believe, when we are in a storm, and study to answer the end for which it was sent, and then the storm shall become a calm. But especially we must consider what is to be done to the sin that raised the storm; that must be discovered, and penitently confessed, that must be detested, disclaimed, and utterly forsaken. What have I to do any more with it? Crucify it, crucify it, for this evil it has done.

2. Jonah reads his own doom, ver. 12. *Take me up and cast me forth into the sea.* He would not himself leap into the sea, but he puts himself into their hands to cast him into the sea, and assures them that then the sea would be calm; and not otherwise. He proposed this in tenderness to the mariners, that they might not suffer for his sake: *Let thy hand be upon me*, saith David, 1 Chron. xxi. 17. who am guilty, let me die for my own sin, but let not the innocent suffer for it. This is the language of true penitents, who earnestly desire that none but themselves may ever smart, or fare the worse for their sins and follies. He proposed it likewise in submission to the will of God, who sent this tempest in pursuit of him; and therefore judgeth himself to be cast into the sea, because to that he plainly saw God judging him, that he might not be judged of the Lord to eternal misery. Note, Those who are truly humbled for sin will cheerfully submit to the will of God, even in a sentence of death itself: If Jonah sees this to be the punishment of his iniquity, he accepts it, he subjects himself to it, and justifies God in it. No matter though the *ship be destroyed*, no matter how it is destroyed, so that the *spirit may but be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*, 1 Cor. v. 5. The reason he gives is, *for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you*. See how ready Jonah is to take all the guilt upon himself, and to look upon all the trouble as theirs: It is purely for my sake who have sinned that this tempest is upon you: therefore cast me forth into the sea, for, (1.) I deserve it; I have wickedly departed from my God, and it is upon my account that he is angry with you; surely I am unworthy to breathe in that air, which for my sake has been hurried with winds, to live in that ship which for my sake has been thus tossed; cast me into the sea after the wares, which for my sake you have thrown into it; drowning is too good for me, a single death is punishment too little for such a complicated offence. (2.) Therefore there is no other way of having the sea calm. If it is I that have raised the storm, it is not casting the wares into the sea that will lay it again: no, you must cast me thither. When conscience is awakened, and a storm raised there, nothing will turn it into a calm, but parting with the sin that occasioned the disturbance, and abandoning that. It is not parting with our money that will pacify conscience, no, it is the Jonah that must be thrown overboard, Jonah is herein a type of Christ, that he gives his life a ransom for many; but with this material difference, that the storm Jonah gave himself up to still, was of his own raising; that storm which Christ gave himself up to still, was of our raising. Yet as Jonah delivered himself up to be cast into a raging sea, that it might be calm, so did our Lord Jesus, when he died, that we might live.

3. The poor mariners did what they could to save themselves from the necessity of throwing Jonah into the sea, but all in vain, ver. 13. *They rowed hard to bring the ship to the land*, that if they must part with Jonah they might let him safe on shore, but they could not, all their pains were to no purpose, for the sea worked harder than they could, and was tempestuous against them, so that they could by no means make the land; if they thought sometimes that they had gained their point, they were presently thrown off to sea again; still their ship was overlaid, their lightening it of the wares made it never the lighter as long as Jonah was in it. And besides they rowed against wind and tide, the wind of God's vengeance, the tide of his counsels; and it is in vain to contend with God, in vain to think of saving ourselves any other way but by destroying our sins. By this it appears these mariners were very loth to execute Jonah's sentence upon himself, though they knew it was for his sake that this tempest was upon them: They were thus very backward to it, partly from a dread of bringing upon themselves the guilt of blood, and partly from a compassion they could not but have for poor Jonah, as a good man, as a man in distress, and a man of sincerity. Note, The more sinners humble and abase themselves, judge and condemn themselves, the more likely they are to find pity both with God and man: The



The more forward Jonah was to say, *Cast me into the sea*, the more backward they were to do it.

4. When they found it necessary to cast Jonah into the sea, they first prayed to God that the guilt of his blood might not lie upon them, or be laid to their charge, *ver. 11*. When they found it in vain to *roar hard*, they quitted their oars, and went to their prayers: *Wherefore they cried unto the Lord*, unto Jehovah the true and living God, and no more to the gods many, and lords many, that they cried to, *ver. 5*. They prayed to the God of Israel, being now convinced by the providences of God concerning Jonah and the information he had given them, that he is God alone. Having determined to cast Jonah into the sea, they first enter a protestation in the court of heaven, that they do not do it *willingly*, much less *maliciously*, or with any design to be revenged upon him, because it was *for his sake* that this tempest was upon them; no, *his God forgive him, as they do!* But they are forced to do it *se defendendo*, having no other way to save their own lives, and they do it as ministers of justice, both God and himself having sentenced him to *great a death*. They therefore present a humble petition to the God whom Jonah feared, that they might not *perish for his life*. See, (1.) What a fear they had of *contracting the guilt of blood*, especially the blood of one that feared God, and worshipped him, and had fellowship with him, as they perceived Jonah had, though in a single instance he had been faulty. Natural conscience cannot but have a dread of *blood-guiltiness*, and make men very earnest in prayer, as David was to be delivered from it, *Psal. li. 11*. So they were here; *We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, lay not upon us innocent blood*. They are now as earnest in praying to be saved from the *peril of the sea*; as they were before in praying to be saved from the peril of the *sea*, especially because Jonah appeared to them to be no ordinary person, but a very good man, a man of God, a worshipper of the great Creator of heaven and earth, upon which account even these rude mariners conceived a veneration for him, and trembled at the thought of taking away his life. *Innocent blood is precious*, but *saints blood, prophets blood*, is much more precious, and so they will find to their cost, that any way bringing themselves under the guilt of it. The mariners saw Jonah pursued by divine vengeance, and yet could not without horror think of being his executioners: Though his God has a controversy with him, yet think they, *Let not our hand be upon him*. The Israelites were at this time *killing the prophets* for doing their duty, witness Jezebel's late persecution, and were *prodigal* of their lives, which is aggravated by the tenderness these heathens had for one whom they perceived to be a prophet, though he was now out of the way of his duty. (2.) What a fear they had of *incurring the wrath of God*; they were jealous, lest he should be angry, if they should be the death of Jonah, for he had said, *Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm*: it is at your peril if you do. Lord say they; *Let us not perish for this man's life*: Let it not be such a fatal dilemma to us; we see we must perish if we spare his life, O let us not perish for taking away his life. And their plea is good, *For thou O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee*, thou hast laid us under a necessity of doing it; the wind that pursued him, the lot that discovered him, were both under thy direction, which we are herein governed by; we are but the instruments of providence, and it is solely against our will that we do it; but we must say, *The will of the Lord be done*. Note, When we are manifestly led by providence to do things contrary to our own inclinations, and quite beyond our own intentions, it will be some satisfaction to us to be able to say, *Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee*. And if God please himself, we ought to be satisfied, though he do not please us.

5. Having deprecated the guilt they dreaded, they proceeded to execution, *ver. 15*. They took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea. They cast him out of their ship, out of their company, and cast him into the sea, a raging stormy sea, that cried, Give, give; surrender the traitor, or expect no peace. We may well think what confusion and amazement poor Jonah was in, when he saw himself ready to be hurried into the presence of that God as a judge, whose presence as a matter he was now fleeing from. Note, Those know not what ruin they run upon, that run away from God. *Woe unto them for they have fled from me*. When *sin* is the Jonah that raises the storm, that must thus be cast forth into the sea; we must abandon it, and be the death of it; must drown that which otherwise will drown us in destruction and perdition. And if we thus by a thorough repentance and reformation cast our sins forth into the sea, never to recall them or return to them again, God will by pardoning mercy subdue our iniquities, and cast them into the depths of the sea too, *Micah vii. 19*.

The throwing of Jonah into the sea immediately put an end to the storm, *The sea* has what she came for and therefore rests contented, she ceaseth from her raging. It is an instance of the sovereign power of God, that he can soon turn the storm into a calm; and of the equity of his government, that when the end of an affliction is answered and attained, the affliction shall presently be removed. He will not contend for ever, will not contend any longer than till we submit ourselves and give up the cause. If we turn from our sins, he will soon turn from his anger.

7. The mariners were hereby more confirmed in their belief that Jonah's God was the only true God, *ver. 16*. Then the men feared the Lord with a great fear, were possessed with a mighty veneration for the God of Israel, and came to a resolution that they would worship him only for the future, for there is no other God that can destroy, that can deliver after this sort. When they saw the power of God in raising and laying the tempest, when they saw his justice upon Jonah his own servant, and when they saw his goodness to them in saving them from the brink of ruin, then they feared the Lord, *Jer. v. 22*. As an evidence of their fear of him, they offered sacrifice to him when they came ashore again in the land of Israel; and for the present made vows that they would do so, in thankfulness for their deliverance, and to make atonement for their souls. Or perhaps, they had something yet on board which might be for a sacrifice to God immediately; or it may be meant of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, with which God is better pleased than with that of an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs. See *Psal. cvii. 22*, &c. We must make vows not only when we are in the pursuit of mercy, but which is much more generous, when we have received mercy, as those that are still studying what we shall render.

Lastly, Jonah's life after all is saved by a miracle, and we shall hear of him again for all this. In the midst of judgment God remembers mercy: Jonah shall be worse frightened than hurt, not so much punished for his sin as reduced to his duty; though he flees from the presence of the Lord, and seems to fall into his avenging hands, yet God has more work for him to do, and therefore hath prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, *ver. 17*. A whale, our Saviour calls it, *Matt. xii. 40*, one of the largest sort of whales, that have wider throats than others; in the belly of which has sometimes been found the dead body of a man in armour. Particular notice is taken in the history of the creation, of God's creating great whales, *Gen. i. 21*. and the *leviathan* in the waters made to play therein, *Psal. civ. 26*. But God finds work for this *leviathan*, has prepared him, has numbered him, so the word is, has appointed him to be Jonah's receiver and deliverer. Note, God has command of all the creatures, and can make any of them serve his designs of mercy to his people; even the fishes of

the sea, that are most from under man's cognizance, even the great whales that are altogether from under man's government. This fish was prepared, lay ready under water close by the ship, that he might keep Jonah from sinking to the bottom, and save him alive, though he deserved to die. Let us stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, and admire his power that he could thus save a drowning man, and his pity that he would thus save one that was running from him and had offended him. It was of the Lord's mercies that Jonah was not now consumed. The fish swallowed up Jonah, not to devour him, but to protect him; *Out of the heater comes forth meat*, for Jonah was alive and well in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, not consumed by the heat of the animal, or suffocated for want of air; it is granted that to nature this was impossible, but not to the God of nature, with whom all things are possible. Jonah by this miraculous preservation was designed to be made, (1.) A monument of divine mercy, for the encouragement of those that have sinned and gone away from God, to return and repent. (2.) A successful preacher to Nineveh; and this miracle wrought for his deliverance, if the tidings of it reached Nineveh; would contribute to his success. (3.) An illustrious type of Christ, who was buried and rose again according to the scriptures, *1 Cor. xv. 1*. according to the scripture, for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so was the Son of man three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, *Matt. xii. 40*. Jonah's burial was a figure of Christ's; God prepared Jonah's grave, so he did Christ's, when it was long before ordained, that he should make his grave with the rich, *Isa. liii. 9*. Was Jonah's grave a strange one, a new one? so was Christ's, one in whom never man before was laid. Was Jonah there the best part of three days and three nights? so was Christ; but both in order to their rising again for the bringing of the doctrine of repentance to the Gentile world. Come see the place where the Lord lay.

## CHAP. II.

We left Jonah in the belly of the fish, and had reason to think we should hear no more of him, that if he were not destroyed by the waters of the sea, he would be consumed in the bowels of that *leviathan*, out of whose mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire, and whose breath kindles coals, *Job xli. 19-21*. But God brings his people through fire, and through water, *Psal. lxxvi. 12*. and by his power, behold, Jonah the prophet is yet alive, and is heard of again. In this chapter God hears from him, for we find him praying; in the next, Nineveh hears from him, for we find him preaching. In his prayer we have, (1.) The great distress and danger he was in, *ver. 2, 3-5, 6*. (2.) The despair he was thereby almost reduced to, *ver. 4*. (3.) The encouragement he took to himself in this deplorable condition, *ver. 4-7*. (4.) The assurance he had of God's favour to him, *ver. 6, 7*. (5.) The warning and instruction he gives to others, *ver. 8*. (6.) The praise and glory of all given to God, *ver. 9*. And in the last verse we have Jonah's deliverance out of the belly of the fish, and his coming safe and sound upon dry land again.

1. THEN Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly. 2. And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me: out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. 3. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. 4. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. 5. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. 6. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. 7. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. 8. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. 9. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

God and his servant Jonah had parted in anger, and the quarrel began on Jonah's side; he ran his country, that he might outrun his work; but we hope to see them both together again, and the reconciliation begins on God's side: In the close of the foregoing chapter we found God returning to Jonah, in a way of mercy, delivering him from going down into the pit, having found a ransom: in this chapter we find Jonah returning to God in a way of duty: he was called up in the former chapter to pray to his God, but we are not told that he did so; however, now at length he is brought to it. Now observe here,

1. When he prayed, *ver. 1*. Then Jonah prayed. Then when he was in trouble; under the sense of sin, and the tokens of God's displeasure against him for sin then he prayed. Note, When we are in affliction we must pray, then we have occasion to pray; then we have errands at the throne of grace, and business there. Then, if ever, we will have a disposition to pray, when the heart is humbled and softened, and made serious; then God expects it. In their affliction they will seek me early, seek me earnestly; and though we bring our afflictions upon ourselves by our sins, yet if we pray in humility and godly sincerity, we shall be welcome to the throne of grace as Jonah was. Then when he was in a hopeful way of deliverance, being preserved alive by miracle, a plain indication that he was reserved for farther mercy, then he prayed. An apprehension of God's good-will to us notwithstanding our offences, gives us boldness of access to him, and opens the lips in prayer, which were closed with the sense of guilt and dread of wrath.

2. Where he prayed; in the fish's belly. No place amiss for prayer. I will that men pray every where; wherever God calls us we may find a way open heavenwards, if it be not our own fault; *Undique ad celos tantum est via*. He that hath Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, wherever he goes carries his altar along with him, that sanctifies the gift, and is himself a living temple. Jonah was here in confinement, the belly of the fish was his prison, was a close and dark dungeon to him, yet there he had freedom of access to God, and walked at liberty in communion with him. Men may shut us out from communion with one another, but not from communion with



with God. Jonah was now in the *bottom of the sea*, yet out of the depths he cries to God; as Paul and Silas prayed in the prison, in the stocks.

3. To whom he prayed; to the Lord his God. He had been fleeing from God, but now he sees the folly of it, and returns to him; by prayer he draws near to that God whom he had gone aside from; and *engageth his heart to approach him*. In prayer he has an eye to him, not only as the Lord, but as his God; a God in covenant with him, for thanks be to God, every transgression in the covenant doth not throw us out of the covenant. This encouragement even backsliding children to return, Jer. iii. 22. *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.*

4. What his prayer was: he afterwards recollected the substance of it, and left it upon record. He reflects upon the workings of his heart towards God, when he was in his distress and danger, and the conflict that was then in his breast between faith and sense, between hope and fear.

1. He reflects upon the earnestness of his prayer, and God's readiness to hear and answer, ver. 2. He said, *I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord.* Note, Many that prayed not at all, or did but whisper prayer when they were in prosperity, are brought to pray; nay, they are brought to cry by reason of their affliction; and it is for this end that afflictions are sent, and they are in vain if this end be not answered: those *heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them*, Job xxxvi. 13. *out of the belly of hell*, and the grave cried I: The fish might well be called a grave, and as it was a prison to which Jonah was condemned for his disobedience, and in which he lay under the wrath of God, it might well be called the belly of hell. Whether this good man was cast, and yet thence he cried to God; and it was not in vain, God heard him, heard the voice of his affliction, the voice of his supplication. There is a hell in the other world, out of which there is no crying to God with any hope of being heard; but whatever hell we may be in the belly of in this world, we may from thence cry to God. When Christ lay, as Jonah, three days and three nights in the grave, though he prayed not, as Jonah did, yet his very lying there cried to God for poor sinners, and the cry was heard.

2. He reflects upon the very deplorable condition that he was in, when he was in the belly of hell; which when he lay there he was very sensible of, and made particular remarks upon. Note, If we would get good by our troubles we must take notice of our troubles, and of the hand of God in them. Jonah observes here,

(1.) How low he was thrown, ver. 3. *Thou hast cast me into the deep.* The mariners cast him there; but he looked above them, and saw the hand of God casting him there. Whatever deeps we are cast into, it is God that casts us into them, and he it is that after he has killed has power to cast into hell. He was cast into the midst of the seas, the heart of the seas, (so the word is) and from thence Christ borrows that Hebrew phrase, when he applies it to his own lying so long in the heart of the earth. For he that is laid dead in the grave, though never so *ebb*, is cut off as effectually from the land of the living, as if he were laid in the heart of the earth.

(2.) How terribly he was beset. *The floods compassed me about.* The channels and springs of the waters of the sea, these surrounded him on every side; it was always high water with him. God's dear saints and servants are sometimes compassed with the floods of affliction, with troubles that are very forcible and violent, that bear down all before them, and that run constantly upon them, as the waters of a river in a continual succession, one trouble upon the neck of another, as Job's messengers of evil tidings: and inclosed with them on all sides, as the church complains, Lam. iii. 7. *He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out*, nor see which way I may flee for safety. *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.* Observe, He calls them God's billows and his waves, not only because he made them. *The sea is his, and he made it*; and because he rules them, for even the winds and the seas obey him; but because he had now commissioned them against Jonah, and limited them, had ordered them to afflict and terrify him, but not to destroy him. These words are plainly quoted by Jonah from Psal. xlii. 7. where, though the translations differ a little, in the original David's complaint is the same *perbatim* with this of Jonah's, *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.* What David spoke figuratively and metaphorically, Jonah applies to himself, as literally fulfilled. For the reconciling of ourselves to our afflictions it is good to search precedents, that we may find there has no temptation taken us but such as is common to men; if ever any man's case was singular and not to be paralleled, sure Jonah's was, and yet to his great satisfaction he finds even the man after God's own heart, making the same complaint of God's waves and billows going over him, that he has now occasion to make. When God performeth the thing that is appointed for us, we shall find that many such things are with him; that even our path of trouble is no untrodden path, and God deals with us no otherwise than as he useth to deal with those that love his name. And therefore for our assistance in our addresses to God, when we are in trouble, it is good to make use of the complaints and prayers, which the saints that have been before us made use of in the like case. See how good it is to be ready in the scriptures; Jonah, when he could make no use of his Bible, by the help of his memory, furnished himself from the scripture with a very proper representation of his case; *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.* To the same purpose, ver. 5. *The waters compassed me about even to the soul*, i. e. they threatened his life, which was hereby brought into imminent danger; or they made an impression upon his spirit; he saw them to be tokens of God's displeasure, and in them the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against him; this reached to his soul, and put that into confusion. And this also is borrowed from David's complaint, Psalm lxxix. 1. *The waters are come in unto my soul.* When without are fightings, it is no marvel that within are fears. Jonah in the fish's belly finds the depths closing him round about, so that if he would get out of his prison, yet he must unavoidably perish in the waters. He feels the sea-weed (which the fish sucked in with the water) wrapped about his head, so that he had no way left him to help himself, nor hope that any one else could help him. Thus are the people of God sometimes perplexed and intangled, that they may learn not to trust in themselves, but in God that raiseth the dead, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

(3.) How fast he was held, ver. 6. He went down to the bottom of the mountains, to the rocks in the sea, upon which the hills and promontories by the sea-side seem to be bottomed, he lay among them, nay he lay under them; the earth with her bars was about him, so close about him that it was likely to be about him for ever. The earth was so shut and locked, so barred and bolted against him, that he was quite cut off from any hope of ever returning to it. Thus helpless, thus hopeless did Jonah's case seem to be. Those whom God contends with, the whole creation is at war with.

3. He reflects upon the very black and melancholy conclusion he was then ready to make concerning himself, and the relief he obtained against it, ver. 4—7. (1.) He began to sink into despair, and to give up himself for gone and undone to all intents and purposes. When the waters compassed him about even to the soul, no marvel that his soul fainted within him, fainted away so that he had not any comfortable enjoyments or expectations, his spirits quite failed, and he looked upon himself as a dead man. Then I said, *I am cast out of thy sight*, and the apprehension of that was the thing

that made his spirit faint within him. He thought God had quite forsaken him, would never return in mercy to him, nor show him any token for good again. He had no example before him of any that were brought alive out of a fish's belly; if he thought of Job upon the dunghill, Joseph in the pit, David in the cave, yet these did not come up to his case. Nor was there any visible way of escape open for him but by miracle, and what reason had he to expect that a miracle of mercy should be wrought for him, who was now made a monument of justice. His own conscience told him that he had wickedly fled from the presence of the Lord, and therefore he might justly cast him away from his presence; and in token of that take away his holy Spirit from him, never to visit him more. What hopes could he have of deliverance out of a trouble which his own ways and doings had procured to himself? Observe, When Jonah would say the worst he could of his case, he saith this, *I am cast out of thy sight*; those, and those only, are miserable whom God has cast out of his sight, whom he will no longer own and favour; What is the misery of the damned in hell, but this, that they are cast out of God's sight? For what is the happiness of heaven but the vision and fruition of God? Sometimes the condition of God's people may be such in this world, as that they may think themselves quite excluded from God's presence, so as no more to see him, or to be regarded by him. Jacob and Israel said, *My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God*, Isa. xl. 27. *Sion said, The Lord has forsaken me, my God has forgotten me*, Isa. xlix. 14. But it is only the furnace of unbelief, for God hath not cast away his people whom he hath chosen. (2.) Yet he recovered himself from sinking into despair with some comfortable prospects of deliverance. Faith corrected and controlled the fumes of fear and distrust. Here was a mighty struggle between sense and faith, but faith had the last word and came off a conqueror. In trying times the issue will be good at last, provided our faith do not fail; it was therefore the continuance of that in his vigour that Christ secured to Peter, *I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not*, Luke xxii. 32. David had fainted if he had not believed, Psal. xxvii. 13. Jonah's faith said, *Yet I will look again towards thy holy temple.* Thus though he was perplexed, yet not in despair; in the depth of the sea, he had this hope in him, as an anchor of the soul sure and stedfast. That which he supports himself with the hope of, is, that he shall yet look again towards God's holy temple. (1.) That he shall live; he shall look again heavenwards, shall again see the light of the sun, though now he seems to be cast into utter darkness; thus against hope he believed in hope. (2.) That he shall live and praise God, and a good man doth not desire to live for any other purpose, Psal. cxix. 175. That he shall enjoy communion with God again in holy ordinances, shall look towards and go up to the holy temple; there to enquire, there to behold the beauty of the Lord. When Hezekiah desired that he might be assured of his recovery, he asked, *What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?* Isa. xxxviii. 22. as if that were the only thing for the sake of which he wished for health: so Jonah here hopes he shall look again towards the temple; that way he had looked many a time with pleasure, rejoicing when he was called to go up to the house of the Lord; and the remembrance of it was his comfort, that when he had opportunity he was no stranger to the holy temple. It now he could not so much as look towards it; in the fish's belly he could not tell which way it lay, but he hopes he shall be again able to look towards it, to look on it, to look into it. Observe, How modestly Jonah expresseth himself, as one conscious to himself of guilt, and unworthiness, he dares not speak of dwelling in God's house as David, knowing that he is no more worthy to be called a son, but he hopes he may be admitted to look towards it. He calls it the holy temple, for the holiness of it was in his eye the beauty of it, and that for the sake of which he loved and looked towards it. The temple was a type of heaven, and he promiseth himself, that though being now a captive exile, he should never be loosed, but die in the pit, yet he should look towards the heavenly temple, and be brought safe thither; though he die in the fish's belly, in the bottom of the sea, yet from thence he hopes his soul shall be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. Or, these words may be taken as Jonah's vow when he was in distress, and he speaks, ver. 9. of paying what he vowed; his vow is that if God deliver him he will praise him, in the gates of the daughter of Zion, Psal. ix. 13, 14. His sin for which God pursued him was fleeing from the presence of the Lord; the folly of which he is now convinced of, and promiseth not only that he will look never again towards Tarsish, but that he will again look towards the temple, and will go from strength to strength till he appear before God there. And thus we see how faith and hope were his relief in his desponding condition; to this he added prayer to God, ver. 7. *When my soul fainted within me, then I remembered the Lord*, I betook myself to that cordial. He remembered what he is, how nigh to those that seem to be thrown at the greatest distance by trouble, how merciful to those that seem to have thrown themselves at a distance from him by sin. He remembered what he had done for him, what he had done for others, what he could do, what he had promised to do, and this kept him from fainting. And remembering God, he made his addresses to him, *My prayer came in unto thee*, i. e. I sent it in, and expected to receive an answer to it. Note, Our afflictions should put us in mind of God, and thereby put us upon prayer to him. When our souls faint we must remember God; and when we remember God, we must send up a prayer to him, a pious ejaculation at least; when we think on his name we should call on his name.

4. He reflects upon the favour of God to him, when thus in his distress he sought to God and trusted in him. (1.) He graciously accepted his prayer, and gave admittance and audience to it; ver. 7. *My prayer being sent to him, came in unto him*, even into his holy temple, it was heard in the highest heavens, though it was prayed in the lowest deeps. (2.) He wonderfully wrought deliverance for him, and when he was in the depth of his misery, gave him the earnest assurance of it, ver. 6. *Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.* Some think he said this when he was vomited upon dry ground, and then it is the language of his thankfulness; and he sets it over-against the great difficulty of his case, that the power of God might be the more magnified in his deliverance; *The earth with her bars was about me for ever*, and yet thou hast brought up my life from the pit, from the bars of the pit; or rather we may suppose it spoken while he was yet in the fish's belly, and then it is the language of his faith; thou hast kept me alive here, in the pit, and therefore thou canst, thou wilt bring up my life from the pit; and he speaks of it with as much assurance as if it were done already, *Thou hast brought up my life.* Though he has not an express promise of deliverance, he has an earnest of it, and on that he depends; he has life, and therefore believes his life shall be brought up from corruption; and this assurance he addresseth to God, *Thou hast done it, O Lord my God.* Thou art the Lord, and therefore canst do it, my God, and therefore wilt do it for me. Note, If the Lord be our God, he will be to us the resurrection and the life, will redeem our lives from destruction, from the power of the grave.

5. He gives warning to others, and instructs them to keep close to God only; ver. 8. *They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.* That is, (1.) They that worship other gods, as the heathen mariners did, and call upon them, and expect relief and comfort from them, they forsake their own mercy, they stand in their own light, they turn their back upon their



own happiness, and go quite out of the way of all good. Note, Idols are *lying vanities*, and those that pay that homage to them, which is due to God only, act as contrary to their interest as to their duty. Or, (2.) They that follow their own inventions, as Jonah himself had done, when he *flew from the presence of the Lord* to go Tarshish, they *forfake their own mercy*, that mercy which they might find in God, and might have such a covenant right and title to it, as to be able to call it *their own*, if they would but keep close to God and their duty. They that think to go any where to be from under the eye of God as Jonah did, that think to mend themselves by out-running his service, as Jonah did, and that grudge his mercy to any poor sinners, and pretend to be wiser than he in judging who are fit to have prophets sent them, and who not, as Jonah did, they *observe lying vanities*, are led away by foolish groundless fancies, and like him they *forfake their own mercy*, and no good can come of it. Note, They that *forfake their own duty*, forfake their own mercy, that run away from the *work of their place and day*, run away from the *comfort* of it.

6. He solemnly binds his soul with a bond, that if God work deliverance for him, the God of his mercies shall be the God of his praises, ver. 9. He covenants with God, (1.) That he will honour him in his devotions with the *sacrifice of thanksgiving*, and God hath said, for the encouragement of those that do so, that they that *offer praise glorify him*. He will, according to the law of Moses, bring a *sacrifice of thanksgiving*, and will offer that according to the law of nature, with the *voice of thanksgiving*. The love and thankfulness of the heart to God, is the life and soul of this duty: without it neither the *sacrifice* of thanksgiving, nor the *voice* of thanksgiving will avail any thing: but it was then by a divine appointment to be expressed by a *sacrifice*, in which the offerer presented the beast slain to God, not in lieu of himself, but in token of himself; and it is now to be expressed by the *voice of thanksgiving*, the *cakes of our lips*, Hos. xiv. 2. the *fruit of our lips*, Heb. xiii. 15. speaking forth, singing forth the high praises of our God. This Jonah here promiseth, that with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he will *mention the loving kindness of the Lord*, to his glory and the encouragement of others. (2.) That he will honour him in his conversation by a punctual performance of his vows, which he made in the fish's belly. Some think it was some work of charity that he vowed, or such a vow as Jacob's was, *Of all that thou hast given me, I will give the tenth unto thee*. More probable his vow was, that if God would deliver him, he would readily go wherever he should please to send him, though it were to Nineveh. When we smart for deserting our duty, it is time to promise that we will adhere to it, and abound in it. Or, perhaps the sacrifice of thanksgiving is the thing he vowed, and that is it which he will pay, as David, *Psal. cxvi. 17, 18, 19*.

7. He concludes with an acknowledgement of God as the Saviour of his people; *Salvation is of the Lord; it belongs to the Lord*, *Psal. lxxiii. 8*. He is the *God of Salvation*, *Psal. lxxviii. 19, 20*. He only can work salvation, and he can do it, be the danger and distress never so great; he has promised salvation to his people that trust in him. All the salvation of his church in general, and of particular saints were wrought by him, he is the *Saviour of them that believe*, 1 Tim. iv. 10. Salvation is still of him, as it has always been, from him alone it is to be expected, and on him we are to depend for it. Jonah's experience shall encourage others in all ages to trust in God, as the God of their salvation; all that read this story shall say it with assurance, say it with admiration, that *salvation is of the Lord*, and is sure to all that belongs to him.

### 10. ¶ And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

We have here Jonah's discharge from his imprisonment, and his deliverance from that death which there he was threatened with; his return though not to life, for he lived in the fish's belly, yet to the *land of the living*, for from that he seemed to be quite cut off; his resurrection though not from death, yet from the grave, for surely never man was so buried alive as Jonah was in the fish's belly. His enlargement may be considered,

1. As an instance of God's power over all the creatures. God spoke to the fish, gave him orders to return him, as before he had given him orders to receive him. God speaks to other creatures, and it is done, they are all his ready obedient servants; but to man he speaketh once, yea twice, and he perceiveth it not, regards it not, but turns a deaf ear to what he saith. Note, God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and serves his own purposes by them.

2. As an instance of God's mercy to a poor penitent, that in his distress prays to him. Jonah had sinned, had done *foolishly, very foolishly*, his own backslidings did now correct him, and it appears by his after-carryage, that his foolishness was not quite driven from him, no not by the rod of this correction; and yet upon his praying and humbling himself before God, here is a miracle in nature wrought for his deliverance, to intimate what a miracle of grace, free grace, God's reception and entertainment of returning sinners is. When God had him at his mercy he shewed him mercy, and did not contend for ever.

3. As a type and figure of Christ's resurrection. He died and was buried, to lay the storm which our sins had raised; and lay in the grave, as Jonah did, three days and three nights a prisoner for our debt; but the third day he came forth, as Jonah did, by his messengers to preach repentance and remission of sins, even to the Gentiles. And thus was another scripture fulfilled. *After two days he will receive us, and the third day he will raise us up*, Hos. vi. 2. The earth trembled as if full of her burden, as the fish was of Jonah.

## CHAP. III.

In this chapter, we have, (1.) Jonah's mission renewed, and the command a second time given him to go preach at Nineveh, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Jonah's message to Nineveh faithfully delivered, by which its speedy overthrow was threatened, ver. 3, 4. (3.) The repentance, humiliation, and reformation of the Ninevites hereupon, ver. 5-9. (4.) God's gracious revocation of the sentence passed upon them, and the preventing of the ruin threatened, ver. 10.

1. AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying. 2. Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. 3. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey. 4. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

We have here a farther evidence of the reconciliation between God and Jonah, and that it was a *thorough* reconciliation, though the controversy between them had run high.

1. By this it appears, that God was perfectly reconciled to Jonah, that he employed him again in his service; and the commission anew given him was an evidence of the remission of his former disobedience. Among men it has been justly pleaded, that the giving of a commission to a criminal convicted is equivalent to a pardon, so it was to Jonah, ver. 1. *The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time*; for, (1.) Jonah must be tried whether he do indeed repent of his former disobedience or no; and whether he have gotten the good designed him, both by his strange punishment and by his strange deliverance. He had deserted his *work and duty*, and had been under an arrest for it, had received a *sentence of death within himself*, but upon his submission God had released him, had given him his life, had given him his liberty; but it is upon his good behaviour that he is released and he must again be put upon the trial, whether he will follow the *will of God or his own will*. After he has been thrown into the sea, and thrown out of it again, God comes and asks him, *Jonah, wilt thou go to Nineveh now? For when God judgeth he will overcome*; he will gain his point, he will bring the disobedient stubborn child to his foot at last. Note, When God has afflicted us, and delivered us out of affliction, we must hear his voice, saying to us, *Now return to the duties which before you neglected*, and which by these providences you are called to. God now said in effect to Jonah, as Christ said to the impotent man, when he had healed him, *Now go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*, John v. 14. a worse thing than lying three days and three nights in the whale's belly. God looks upon men when he has afflicted them, and has delivered them out of their affliction, to see whether they will mend of that fault particularly for which they were corrected, and therefore in that thing we are concerned to see it, that we receive not the grace of God in vain, neither in the correction nor in the deliverance, for both are designed to be means of grace. (2.) *Jonah shall be trusted*, in token of God's favour to him. God might justly have said concerning Jonah, as we would concerning one that had cheated us, and dealt treacherously with us, that though we would not proceed to the rigour of the law against him, nor ruin him, yet we would never again repose a confidence in him; justly might the Spirit of prophecy, which Jonah had resisted and rebelled against, depart from him, with a resolution never to return to him any more. One would have expected that though his life was spared, yet he should be laid under a disability and incapacity ever to serve the government again in the character of a prophet. But behold! the word of the Lord comes to him again, to shew that when God forgives he forgets, and whom he forgives, he gives a new heart and a new spirit to; he receives those into his family again, and restores them to their former estate, that had been prodigal children and disobedient servants. Note, God's making use of us, is the best evidence of his being at peace with us. Hereby it will appear that our sins are pardoned, and we have the good will of God towards us, both his good word come unto us, and do we experience his good work in us? If so, we have reason to admire the riches of free grace, and to own our obligations to the Lord Jesus, who received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell even among them, and employ them in his work, *Psal. lxxviii. 18*.

2. By this it appears that Jonah was well reconciled to God, that he was not now as he had been before disobedient to the heavenly vision, did not flee from the presence of the Lord, as he had done; he neither endeavoured to avoid hearing the command, nor did he decline obeying it, made no objections as he had done, that the journey was long, the errand invidious, the delivery of it perilous; and if the threatened judgment did not come he should be reproached as a false prophet, and the impenitency of his own nation would be upbraided, (which he had objected, chap. iv. 2.) But now, without murmuring and disputing, *Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord*, ver. 3. See here, (1.) The nature of repentance; it is the change of our mind and way, and a return to our work and duty, from which we had turned aside; it is doing that good which we had left undone. (2.) The benefit of affliction; it reduceth those to their place that had deserted it. Jonah might truly say with David, *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word*; and therefore though it was dreadful, though it was painful to me, and for the present not joyous but grievous, yet it was good, very good for me that I was afflicted. (3.) See the power of divine grace, working with affliction, for otherwise affliction of itself would rather drive men from God than bring them to him; but God by his grace can turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and make those willing in the day of his power, freely willing to come under his yoke, whose neck had been as an iron sinew. (4.) See the duty of all those to whom the word of the Lord comes, they must in all points conform themselves to it, and yield a cheerful faithful obedience to the orders God gives them. *Jonah arose*, and did not sit still in sloth or sullenness, he went directly to Nineveh, though it was a great way off, and a place where it is likely he never was before, yet thither he took his journey, according to the word of the Lord. God's servants must go where he sends them, come when he calls them, and do what he bids them: whatever appears to be the word of the Lord we must conscientiously do according to it.

Let us now see what was the command and commission given him, and what he did in prosecution of it.

1. He was sent as a herald at arms, in the name of the God of heaven, to proclaim war with Nineveh, ver. 2. *Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, that metropolis, and preach unto it, preach against it*, so the Chaldee, what is against us is preached to us, that we may hear it, and taking warning; and what is preached to us, if we do not give ear to it, and mix faith with it, will prove to be against us. Jonah is sent to Nineveh, which was at this time the chief city of the Gentile world, as an indication of God's gracious intentions in process of time to make the light of divine revelation to shine in those dark regions. God knew that if Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon had had the means of grace they would have repented, and yet he denied them those means, *Matth. xi. 21, 23*. He knew that if Nineveh had now the means of grace they would repent, and he gave them those means, sent Jonah, though not to preach repentance to them expressly (for we find not he had that in his commission) yet to preach them to repentance, for that was the happy effect of what he had in commission. If God thus in dispensing his favours, in giving the means of grace to some places and not to others, and the Spirit of grace to some persons and not to others, acts by prerogative and in a way of sovereignty, who may say unto him, *What dost thou? May he not do what he will with his own?* He is debtor to no man. Go and preach (saith God) the preaching that I bid thee. That is, (1.) The preaching that I did bid thee when I first ordered thee to go thither, chap. i. 2. go and cry against it, denounce divine judgments against it, tell the men of Nineveh that their wickedness is come up to God, and God's vengeance is coming down upon them. This was the message Jonah was then very loth to deliver, and therefore



therefore flew off, and went to Tarsish; but when he is brought to it the second time God doth not at all alter the message, to gratify him or make it the more passible with him, no, he must *now* preach the very same that he was then ordered to preach, and would not. Note, The word of God is an unalterable thing, and will not be made to bend to the humours either of its preachers or of its hearers; it shall never comply with their humours and fancies, but they must comply with its truths and laws. See Jer. xv. 19. *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them* Or, (2.) The preaching that *I shall bid thee* when thou comest thither; this was an encouragement to him in his undertaking that God would go along with him, that the spirit of prophecy should abide upon him, and be ready to him, when he was at Nineveh, to give him all the farther instructions that were needful for him. This intimated that he should hear from him again, which would be his great support in this hazardous expedition; as when God sent Abraham to offer up Isaac, he gave him a like intimation, by telling him he must do it upon *one of the mountains which he would afterwards direct him to*; the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, he leads his people step by step, and so he expects they should follow him. Jonah must go with an implicit faith, though he knows *whither he goes*; he shall not know till he comes thither what message he must deliver, but whatever it is he must deliver it, be it pleasing or displeasing. Thus God will keep us in a continual dependence upon himself, and the directions of his word and providence: what he doth, and what he will have us do we *know not now* but we shall know hereafter. Admirals, sometimes when they are sent abroad, are not to open their commission till they are got so many leagues off at sea: So Jonah must go to Nineveh, and when he comes there shall he told what to say.

2. He faithfully and boldly delivered his errand. When he came to Nineveh he found his diocese large, it was an exceeding great city of three days journey, ver. 2. a city great to God, so the Hebrew phrase is, meaning no more than as we render it, *exceeding great*; this honour that language doth to the great God, that great things derive their denomination from him. The greatness of Nineveh consisted chiefly in the extent of it; it was much larger than Babylon; such a city, saith Diodorus Siculus, as no man ever after built; it was one hundred and fifty furlongs long, and ninety broad, and four hundred and eighty in compass; the walls one hundred feet high, and so thick that three chariots might go abreast upon them; on them were one thousand five hundred towers, each of them two hundred feet high. It is here said to be of three days journey; for the compass of the walls, as some relate, was four hundred and eighty furlongs, which allowing eight furlongs to a mile, makes sixty miles, which may well be reckoned *three days journey* for a footman, twenty miles a day. Or walking slowly and gravely as Jonah must when he went about preaching, it would take him up at least *three days* to go through all the principal streets and lanes of the city, to proclaim his message, that all might have notice of it. And when he came thither he *lost no time*, he did not come to look about him, but applied himself closely to his work, and when he began to enter into the city, he did not retire into an inn to refresh himself after his journey, but opened his commission immediately, according to his instructions, and he cried, and said, *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*; this, no doubt, he had particular warrant and direction to say; whether he enlarged upon this text, as is most probable, showing them the controversy God had with them, and how provoking their wickedness was, and what reason they had to expect destruction, and to give credit to this warning, or whether he only repeated these words again and again, is not certain, but this was the purport of his message. (1.) He must tell them that this great city shall be overthrown; he meant, and they understood him, that it should be overthrown, not by war, but by some immediate stroke from heaven; either by an earthquake, or by fire and brimstone as Sodom was. The wickedness of cities ripens them for destruction, and their wealth and greatness cannot protect them from destruction, when the measure of their iniquity is full and the day of vengeance is come. Great cities are easily overthrown when the great God comes to reckon with them. (2.) He must tell them that it shall shortly be overthrown; at the end of forty days. It has a reprieve granted, *so long* God will wait to see, if upon this alarm given they will humble themselves and amend their doings, and so prevent the ruin threatened; see how slow God is to wrath: though Nineveh's wickedness cried for vengeance, yet it shall be spared for forty days, that it may have space to repent and meet God in the way of his judgments. But he will wait no longer, if in that time they turn not, they shall know that he hath *whet his sword, and made it ready*. Forty days is a long time for a righteous God to defer his judgments, yet it is but a little time for an unrighteous people to repent and reform in, and so turn away the judgments coming. The fixing of the day thus, with all possible assurance, would help to convince them that it was a message from God, for no man durst be so positive in prefixing a time, however he might prognosticate the thing itself; it would also startle them into a preparation for it. It may justly awaken secure sinners by a sincere conversion to prevent their own ruin, when they see they have but a little time to turn them in. And should it not awaken us to get ready for death, to consider that the thing itself is certain, and the time fixed in the counsel of God, but we are therefore kept in the dark and at uncertainty about it, that we may be always ready? We cannot be so sure that we shall live forty days, as Nineveh now was, that it should stand forty days; nay, I think it is more probable we should die within thirty or forty days, than that we should live thirty or forty years, and so many years in the day of our security we are apt to promise ourselves. We would be alarmed if we were sure not to live a month, and yet we are careless, though we are not sure to live a day.

*Fleres, si scires unam tua tempora mensem;  
Rides, cum not sit forsitan una dies.*

5. ¶ So the people of Nineveh believed GOD, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7. And he caused it to be proclaimed, and published through Nineveh (by the decree of the king and his nobles) saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water. 8. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto GOD: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. 9. Who can tell if GOD will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger,

that we perish not? 10. ¶ And GOD saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and GOD repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.

Here is, 1. A wonder of divine grace in the repentance and reformation of Nineveh, upon the warning given them of their destruction in approaching; *Verily I say unto you*, we have not found so great an influence of it, no not in Israel; and it will rise up in judgment against the men of the gospel generation, and condemn them; for the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas, but behold a greater than Jonas is here. Matt. xii. 41. Nay, it did condemn the impenitency and obstinacy of Israel at that time. God sent many prophets to Israel, and those well known among them, to be mighty in word and deed, but to Nineveh he sent only one, and he a stranger, whose aspect was mean, we may suppose, and his bodily presence weak, especially after the fatigue of so long a journey; and yet they repented, but Israel repented not. Jonah preached but one sermon, and we do not find that he gave them any sign or wonder, by the accomplishment of which his word might be confirmed, and yet they were wrought upon, while Israel continued obstinate, whose prophets chose out words wherewith to reason with them, and confirmed them by signs following; Jonah only threatened wrath and ruin, we do not find that he gave them any calls to repentance, or directions how to repent, much less any encouragements to hope that they should find mercy if they did repent, and yet they repented; but Israel persisted in impenitency, though the prophets sent to them, drew them with cords of a man, and with bands of love, and assured them of great things which God would do for them if they did repent and reform.

Now let us see what was the method of Nineveh's repentance, what the steps and particular instances of it.

1. They believed God; i. e. they gave credit to the word which Jonah spake to them in the name of God; they believed that though they had many that they called gods, yet there is but one living and true God, the sovereign Lord of all; that to him they were accountable, that they had sinned against him, and were become obnoxious to his justice; that this notice sent them of ruin approaching, came from him, and consequently that the ruin itself would come from him at the time prefixed, if it were not prevented by a timely repentance; that he is a merciful God, and there might be some hopes of the turning away of the wrath threatened, if they did turn away from the sins for which it was threatened. Note, They that come to God, that come back to him after they have revolted from him, must believe, must believe that he is, that he is reconcilable, that he will be theirs if they take the right course. And observe what great faith God can work by very small, weak and unlikely means; he can bring even Ninevites by a few threatening words to be obedient to the faith. Some think the Ninevites heard from the mariners or others, or from Jonah himself, of his being cast into the sea, and delivered thence by miracles, and that served for a confirmation of his mission, and brought them the more readily to believe God speaking by him. But of this we have no certainty; however Christ's resurrection, typified by that of Jonah's, served for the confirmation of his gospel, and contributed abundantly to their great success, who in his name preached repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

2. They brought word to the king of Nineveh, who, some think, was at this time Sardanapalus, others Plul, king of Assyria: Jonah was not directed to go to him first, in respect to his royal dignity; crowned heads when guilty heads are before God upon a level with common heads; and therefore Jonah is not sent to the court, but to the streets of Nineveh to make his proclamation. However, an account is brought of his errand to the king of Nineveh, not by way of information against Jonah, as a disturber of the public peace, that he might be silenced and punished, which perhaps would have been done if he had cried thus in the streets of Jerusalem, who killed God's prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her; no, the account was brought him of it, not as of a crime, but as of a message from heaven, by some that were concerned for the public welfare, and whose hearts trembled for it. Note, Those kings are happy who have such about them, as will give them notice of the things that belong to the kingdom's peace, of the warnings both of the word and providence of God, and the tokens of God's displeasure they are under; and those people are happy who have such kings over them as will take notice of those things.

3. The king set them a good example of humiliation; ver. 6. when he heard of the word of God sent to him, he rose from his throne; as Eglon king of Moab, who, when Ehud told him he had a message to him from God, rose up out of his seat. The king of Nineveh rose from his throne, not only in reverence to a word from God in general, but in fear of a word of wrath in particular; and in sorrow and shame for sin, by which he and his people were become obnoxious to his wrath. He rose from his royal throne, and laid aside his royal robe, the badge of his imperial dignity, as an acknowledgment, that having not used his power as he ought to have done for the restraining of violence and wrong, and the maintaining of right, he had forfeited his throne and robe to the justice of God; he had rendered himself unworthy of the honour put upon him, and the trust reposed in him as a king, and it was just with God to take it from him. Even the king himself disdained not to put on the garb of a penitent, for he covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, in token of his humiliation for sin and his dread of divine vengeance. It well becomes the greatest of men to abase themselves before the great God.

4. The people conformed to the example of the king, nay it should seem they led the way, for they first began to put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them, even to the least of them, ver. 5. The least of them, that had least to lose in the overthrow of the city, yet did not think themselves unconcerned in the alarm; and the greatest of them that had used to lie at ease and live in state, did not think it below them to put on the marks of humiliation. The wearing of sackcloth, especially to those who were used to fine linen, was a very uneasy thing, and they would not have done it, if they had not had a deep sense of their sin, and their danger by reason of sin, which hereby they designed to express. Note, Those that would not be ruined must be humbled; that would not destroy their souls, must afflict their souls; when God's judgments threaten us, we are concerned to humble ourselves under his mighty hand; and though bodily exercise alone profits nothing, and a man's spreading sackcloth and ashes under him, if that be all, is but a jest, it is the heart that God looks at, Isaiah lviii. 5. yet on solemn days of humiliation, when God in his providences calls to mourning and girding with sackcloth, we must by the outward expressions of inward sorrow glorify God with our bodies; at least by laying aside the ornaments.

5. A general fast was proclaimed and observed throughout that great city, ver. 7, 8, 9. It was ordered by the decree of the king and his nobles, the whole legislative power concurred in appointing it, and the whole body of the people concurred in observing it, and both these ways it became a national act, and it was necessary it should be so when it was to prevent a national



own happiness, and go quite out of the way of all good. Note, Idols are *lying vanities*, and those that pay that homage to them, which is due to God only, act as contrary to their interest as to their duty. Or, (2.) They that follow their own inventions, as Jonah himself had done, when he *flew from the presence of the Lord* to go Tarshish, they *forfake their own mercy*, that mercy which they might find in God, and might have such a covenant right and title to it, as to be able to call it *their own*, if they would but keep close to God and their duty. They that think to go any where to be from under the eye of God as Jonah did, that think to mend themselves by out-running his service, as Jonah did, and that grudge his mercy to any poor sinners, and pretend to be wiser than he in judging who are fit to have prophets sent them, and who not, as Jonah did, they *observe lying vanities*, are led away by foolish groundless fancies, and like him they *forfake their own mercy*, and no good can come of it. Note, They that *forfake their own duty*, forfake their own *mercy*, that run away from the *work* of their *place* and *day*, run away from the *comfort* of it.

6. He solemnly binds his soul with a bond, that if God work deliverance for him, the God of his mercies shall be the God of his praises, ver. 9. He covenants with God, (1.) That he will honour him in his devotions with the *sacrifice of thanksgiving*, and God hath said, for the encouragement of those that do so, that they that *offer praise glorify him*. He will, according to the law of Moses, bring a *sacrifice of thanksgiving*, and will offer that according to the law of nature, with the *voice of thanksgiving*. The love and thankfulness of the heart to God, is the life and soul of this duty: without it, neither the *sacrifice* of thanksgiving, nor the *voice* of thanksgiving will avail any thing: but it was then by a divine appointment to be expressed by a *sacrifice*, in which the offerer presented the beast slain to God, not in *lieu* of himself, but in *token* of himself; and it is now to be expressed by the *voice of thanksgiving*, the *caldes of our lips*, Hos. xiv. 2. the *fruit of our lips*, Heb. xiii. 15. speaking forth, singing forth the high praises of our God. This Jonah here promiseth, that with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he will *mention the loving kindness of the Lord*, to his glory and the encouragement of others. (2.) That he will honour him in his conversation by a punctual performance of his vows, which he made in the fish's belly. Some think it was some work of charity that he vowed, or such a vow as Jacob's was, *Of all that thou hast given me, I will give the tenth unto thee*. More probable his vow was, that if God would deliver him, he would readily go wherever he should please to send him, though it were to Nineveh. When we smart for deserting our duty, it is time to promise that we will adhere to it, and abound in it. Or, perhaps the sacrifice of thanksgiving is the thing he *vowed*, and that is it which he will *pay*, as David, *Psal. cxvi. 17, 18, 19*.

7. He concludes with an acknowledgement of God as the Saviour of his people; *Salvation is of the Lord*; it belongs to the Lord, *Psal. lxxiii. 8*. He is the God of Salvation, *Psal. lxxviii. 19, 20*. He only can work salvation, and he can do it, be the danger and distress never so great; he has promised salvation to his people that trust in him. All the salvation of his church in general, and of particular saints were wrought by him, he is the Saviour of them that believe, 1 Tim. iv. 10. Salvation is still of him, as it has always been, from him alone it is to be expected, and on him we are to depend for it. Jonah's experience shall encourage others in all ages to trust in God, as the God of their salvation; all that read this story shall say it with assurance, say it with admiration, that *salvation is of the Lord*, and is sure to all that belongs to him.

10. ¶ And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

We have here Jonah's discharge from his imprisonment, and his deliverance from that death which there he was threatened with; his return though not to life, for he lived in the fish's belly, yet to the land of the living, for from that he seemed to be quite cut off; his resurrection though not from death, yet from the grave, for surely never man was so buried alive as Jonah was in the fish's belly. His enlargement may be considered,

1. As an instance of God's power over all the creatures. God spoke to the fish, gave him orders to return him, as before he had given him orders to receive him. God speaks to other creatures, and it is done, they are all his ready obedient servants; but to man he speaketh once, yea twice, and he perceiveth it not, regards it not, but turns a deaf ear to what he saith. Note, God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and serves his own purposes by them.

2. As an instance of God's mercy to a poor penitent, that in his distress prays to him. Jonah had sinned, had done foolishly, very foolishly, his own backslidings did now correct him, and it appears by his after-carryage, that his foolishness was not quite driven from him, no not by the rod of this correction; and yet upon his praying and humbling himself before God, here is a miracle in nature wrought for his deliverance, to intimate what a miracle of grace, free grace, God's reception and entertainment of returning sinners is. When God had him at his mercy he shewed him mercy, and did not contend for ever.

3. As a type and figure of Christ's resurrection. He died and was buried, to lay the form which our sins had raised; and lay in the grave, as Jonah did, three days and three nights a prisoner for our debt; but the third day he came forth, as Jonah did, by his messengers to preach repentance and remission of sins, even to the Gentiles. And thus was another scripture fulfilled. *After two days he will receive us, and the third day he will raise us up*, Hos. vi. 2. The earth trembled as if full of her burden, as the fish was of Jonah.

### CHAP. III.

In this chapter, we have, (1.) Jonah's mission renewed, and the command a second time given him to go preach at Nineveh, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Jonah's message to Nineveh faithfully delivered, by which its speedy overthrow was threatened, ver. 3, 4. (3.) The repentance, humiliation, and reformation of the Ninevites hereupon, ver. 5-9. (4.) God's gracious revocation of the sentence passed upon them, and the preventing of the ruin threatened, ver. 10.

1. AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, 2. Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. 3. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey. 4. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

We have here a further evidence of the reconciliation between God and Jonah, and that it was a thorough reconciliation, though the controversy between them had run high.

1. By this it appears, that God was perfectly reconciled to Jonah, that he employed him again in his service; and to a man who anew given him, was an evidence of the remission of his former disobedience. Note, when it has been justly pleaded, that the giving of a commission to a criminal convicted is equivalent to a pardon, so it was to Jonah, ver. 1. *The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time*: for, (1.) Jonah would be tried, whether he did indeed repent of his former disobedience or no; and whether he have gotten the good designed him, both by his strange punishment and by his strange deliverance. He had defied his *work* and *duty*, and had been under an arrest for it, had received a *sentence of death* within his self, but upon his submission God had released him, had given him his life, had given him his liberty; but it is upon his good behaviour that he is released and he must again be put upon the trial, whether he will follow the *will of God* or his *own will*. After he has been thrown into the sea, and thrown out of it again, God comes and asks him, *Jonah, wilt thou go to Nineveh now? For when God judgeth he will overcome*; he will gain his point, he will bring the disobedient stubborn child to his foot at last. Note, When God has afflicted us, and delivered us out of affliction, we must hear his voice, saying to us, *Now return to the duties which before you neglected*, and which by these providences you are called to. God now said in effect to Jonah, as Christ said to the impotent man, when he had healed him, *Now go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*, John v. 14. a worse thing than lying three days and three nights in the whale's belly. God looks upon men when he has afflicted them, and has delivered them out of their affliction, to see whether they will mend of that fault particularly for which they were corrected, and therefore in that thing we are concerned to see it, that we receive not the grace of God in vain, neither in the correction nor in the deliverance, for both are designed to be means of grace. (2.) *Jonah shall be trusted*, in token of God's favour to him. God might justly have said concerning Jonah, as we would concerning one that had cheated us, and dealt treacherously with us, that though we would not proceed to the rigour of the law against him, nor ruin him, yet we would never again repose a confidence in him: justly might the Spirit of prophecy, which Jonah had resisted and rebelled against, depart from him, with a resolution never to return to him any more. One would have expected that though his life was spared, yet he should be laid under a disability and incapacity ever to serve the government again in the character of a prophet. But behold! the word of the Lord comes to him again, to show that when God forgives he forgets, and whom he forgives, he gives a new heart and a new spirit to; he receives those into his family again, and restores them to their former estate, that had been prodigal children and disobedient servants. Note, God's making use of us, is the best evidence of his being at peace with us. Hereby it will appear that our sins are pardoned, and we have the good will of God towards us, both his good word come unto us, and do we experience his good work in us? If so, we have reason to admire the riches of free grace, and to own our obligations to the Lord Jesus, who received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell even among them, and employ them in his work, *Psal. lxxviii. 18*.

2. By this it appears that Jonah was well reconciled to God, that he was not now as he had been before disobedient to the heavenly vision, did not flee from the presence of the Lord, as he had done; he neither endeavoured to avoid hearing the command, nor did he decline obeying it, made no objections as he had done, that the journey was long, the errand invidious, the delivery of it perilous; and if the threatened judgment did not come he should be reproached as a false prophet, and the impenitency of his own nation would be upbraided, (which he had objected, chap. iv. 2.) But now, without murmuring and disputing, *Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord*, ver. 3. See here, (1.) The nature of repentance; it is the change of our mind and way, and a return to our work and duty, from which we had turned aside; it is doing that good which we had left undone. (2.) The benefit of affliction; it reduceth those to their place that had deserted it. Jonah might truly say with David, *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word*; and therefore though it was dreadful, though it was painful to me, and for the present not joyous but grievous, yet it was good, very good for me that I was afflicted. (3.) See the power of divine grace, working with affliction, for otherwise affliction of itself would rather drive men from God than bring them to him; but God by his grace can turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and make those willing in the day of his power, freely willing to come under his yoke, whose neck had been as an iron sinew. (4.) See the duty of all those to whom the word of the Lord comes, they must in all points conform themselves to it, and yield a cheerful faithful obedience to the orders God gives them. *Jonah arose*, and did not sit still in sloth or fullness, he went directly to Nineveh, though it was a great way off, and a place where it is likely he never was before, yet thither he took his journey, according to the word of the Lord. God's servants must go where he sends them, come when he calls them, and do what he bids them; whatever appears to be the word of the Lord we must conscientiously do according to it.

Let us now see what was the command and commission given him, and what he did in prosecution of it.

1. He was sent as a herald at arms, in the name of the God of heaven, to proclaim war with Nineveh, ver. 2. *Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, that metropolis, and preach unto it, preach against it*, to the Chaldees, what is against us is preached to us, that we may hear it, and taking warning; and what is preached to us, if we do not give ear to it, and mix faith with it, will prove to be against us. Jonah is sent to Nineveh, which was at this time the chief city of the Gentile world, as an indication of God's gracious intentions in process of time to make the light of divine revelation to shine in those dark regions. God knew that if Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon had had the means of grace they would have repented, and yet he denied them those means, *Matth. xi. 21, 23*. He knew that if Nineveh had now the means of grace they would repent, and he gave them those means, sent Jonah, though not to preach repentance to them expressly (for we find not he had that in his commission) yet to preach them to repentance, for that was the happy effect of what he had in commission. If God thus in dispensing his favours, in giving the means of grace to some places and not to others, and the Spirit of grace to some persons and not to others, acts by prerogative and in a way of sovereignty, who may say unto him, *What dost thou? May he not do what he will with his own?* He is debtor to no man. *Go and preach (saith God) the preaching that I bid thee*. That is, (1.) The preaching that I did bid thee when I first ordered thee to go thither, chap. 1, 2. *go and cry against it*, denounce divine judgments against it, tell the men of Nineveh that their wickedness is come up to God, and God's vengeance is coming down upon them. This was the message Jonah was then very loth to deliver, and therefore



therefore flew off, and went to Tarshish: but when he is brought to it, the second time God doth not at all alter the message, to greatly stir or make it the more *palatable* with him, no, he must *none* preach the very same that he was *then* ordered to preach, and would not. Note. The word of God is a considerable thing, and will not be made to bend to the humours either of its preachers or of its hearers; it shall never comply with their humours and fancies, but they must comply with its truths and laws. See Jer. xv. 19. *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them* Or, (2.) The preaching that *I shall but thee when thou comest thither*; this was an encouragement to him in his undertaking that God would go along with him, that the spirit of prophecy should abide upon him, and be ready to him, when he was at Nineveh, to give him all the farther instructions that were needful for him. This intimated that he should hear from him again, which would be his great support in this hazardous expedition; as when God sent Abraham to offer up Isaac, he gave him a like intimation, by telling him he must do it upon *one of the mountains which he would afterwards direct him to*; the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, he leads his people step by step, and so he expects they should follow him. Jonah must go with an implicit faith, though he knows *whither he goes*; he shall not know till he comes thither what message he must deliver, but whatever it is he must deliver it, be it pleasing or displeasing. Thus God will keep us in a continual dependence upon himself, and the directions of his word and providence: what he doth, and what he will have us do we *know not now* but we shall know hereafter. Admirals, sometimes when they are sent abroad, are not to open their commission till they are got so many leagues off at sea: So Jonah must go to Nineveh, and when he comes there shall he told what to say.

2. He faithfully and boldly delivered his errand. When he came to Nineveh he found his diocese large, it was an *exceeding great city of three days journey*, ver. 2. a city great to God, so the Hebrew phrase is, meaning no more than as we render it, *exceeding great*; this honour that language doth to the great God, that great things derive their denomination from him. The greatness of Nineveh consisted chiefly in the extent of it; it was much larger than Babylon; such a city, saith Diodorus Siculus, as no man ever after built; it was one hundred and fifty furlongs long, and ninety broad, and four hundred and eighty in compass; the walls one hundred feet high, and so thick that three chariots might go abreast upon them; on them were one thousand five hundred towers, each of them two hundred feet high. It is here said to be of *three days journey*; for the compass of the walls, as some relate, was four hundred and eighty furlongs, which allowing eight furlongs to a mile, makes sixty miles, which may well be reckoned *three days journey* for a footman, twenty miles a day. Or walking slowly and gravely as Jonah must when he went about preaching, it would take him up at least *three days* to go through all the principal streets and lanes of the city, to proclaim his message, that all might have notice of it. And when he came thither he *left no time*, he did not come to look about him, but applied himself closely to his work, and when he began to enter into the city, he did not retire into an inn to refresh himself after his journey, but opened his commission immediately, according to his instructions, and he cried, and said, *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*; this, no doubt, had particular warrant and direction to say; whether he enlarged upon this text, as is most probable, showing them the controversy God had with them, and how provoking their wickedness was, and what reason they had to expect destruction, and to give credit to this warning, or whether he only repeated these words again and again, is not certain, but this was the purport of his message. (1.) He must tell them that this *great city* shall be *overthrown*; he meant, and they understood him, that it should be overthrown, not by war, but by some immediate stroke from heaven; either by an earthquake, or by fire and brimstone as Sodom was. The wickedness of cities renders them for destruction, and their wealth and greatness cannot protect them from destruction, when the measure of their iniquity is full and the day of vengeance is come. Great cities are easily overthrown when the great God comes to reckon with them. (2.) He must tell them that it shall *shortly* be overthrown; at the end of forty days. It has a reprieve granted, *so long* God will wait to see, if upon this alarm given they will humble themselves and amend their doings, and so prevent the ruin threatened; see how slow God is to wrath: though Nineveh's wickedness cried for vengeance, yet it shall be feared for forty days, that it may have space to repent and meet God in the way of his judgments. But he will wait no longer, if in that time they turn not, they shall know that he hath *whet his sword, and made it ready*. Forty days is a long time for a righteous God to defer his judgments, yet it is but a little time for an unrighteous people to repent and reform in, and so turn away the judgments coming. The fixing of the day thus, with all possible assurance, would help to convince them that it was a message from God, for no man durst be so positive in prefixing a time, however he might prognosticate the thing itself; it would also stir them into a preparation for it. It may justly awaken secure sinners by a sincere conversion to prevent their own ruin, when they see they have but a little time to turn them in. And should it not awaken us to get ready for death, to consider that the thing itself is certain, and the time fixed in the counsel of God, but we are therefore kept in the dark and at uncertainty about it, that we may be *always ready*? We cannot be so sure that we shall live forty days, as Nineveh now was, that it should stand forty days; nay, I think it is more probable we should die within thirty or forty days, than that we should live thirty or forty years, and so many years in the day of our security we are apt to promise ourselves. We would be alarmed if we were sure not to live a month, and yet we are careless, though we are not sure to live a day.

*Fleres, si scires unam tuu tempora mensum;  
Rides, cum not sit forsan una dies.*

5. ¶ So the people of Nineveh believed GOD, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7. And he caused it to be proclaimed, and published through Nineveh (by the decree of the king and his nobles) saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water. 8. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto GOD: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. 9. Who can tell if GOD will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger,

that we perish not? 10. ¶ And GOD saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and GOD repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.

Here is, 1. A wonder of divine grace in the repentance and reformation of Nineveh, upon the warning given them of their destruction approaching; *Verily I say unto you*, we have not found so great an influence of it, no, not in Israel; and it will rise up in judgment against the men of the gospel generation, and condemn them; for the *Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas*, but *behold a greater than Jonas is here*. Matt. xii. 41. Nay, it did condemn the impenitency and obstinacy of Israel at that time. God sent many prophets to Israel, and those well known among them, to be mighty in word and deed, but to Nineveh he sent only one, and he a stranger, whose aspect was mean, we may suppose, and his bodily presence weak, especially after the fatigue of so long a journey; and yet they repented, but Israel repented not. Jonah preached but one sermon, and we do not find that he gave them any sign or wonder, by the accomplishment of which his word might be confirmed, and yet they were wrought upon, while Israel continued obstinate, whose prophets chose out words wherewith to reason with them, and confirmed them by signs following; Jonah only threatened wrath and ruin, we do not find that he gave them any calls to repentance, or directions how to repent, much less any encouragements to hope that they should find mercy if they did repent, and yet they repented; but Israel persisted in impenitency, though the prophets sent to them, drew them with cords of a man, and with bands of love, and assured them of great things which God would do for them if they did repent and reform.

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2. They brought word to the king of Nineveh, who, some think, was at this time Sardanapalus, others Pul, king of Assyria: Jonah was not directed to go to him first, in respect to his royal dignity; crowned heads when guilty heads are before God upon a level with common heads; and therefore Jonah is not sent to the court, but to the streets of Nineveh to make his proclamation. However, an account is brought of his errand to the king of Nineveh, not by way of information against Jonah, as a disturbance of the public peace, that he might be silenced and punished, which perhaps would have been done if he had cried thus in the streets of Jerusalem, who killed God's prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her; no, the account was brought him of it, not as of a crime, but as of a message from heaven, by some that were concerned for the public welfare, and whose hearts trembled for it. Note, Those kings are happy who have such about them, as will give them notice of the things that belong to the kingdom's peace, of the warnings both of the word and providence of God, and the tokens of God's displeasure they are under; and those people are happy who have such kings over them as will take notice of those things.

3. The king set them a good example of humiliation; ver. 6. when he heard of the word of God sent to him, he rose from his throne; as Eglon king of Moab, who, when Ehud told him he had a message to him from God, rose up out of his seat. The king of Nineveh rose from his throne, not only in reverence to a word from God in general, but in fear of a word of wrath in particular; and in sorrow and shame for sin, by which he and his people were become obnoxious to his wrath. He rose from his royal throne, and laid aside his royal robe, the badge of his imperial dignity, as an acknowledgment, that having not used his power as he ought to have done for the restraining of violence and wrong, and the maintaining of right, he had forfeited his throne and robe to the justice of God; had rendered himself unworthy of the honour put upon him, and the trust reposed in him as a king, and it was just with God to take it from him. Even the king himself disdained not to put on the garb of a penitent, for he covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, in token of his humiliation for sin and his dread of divine vengeance. It well becomes the greatest of men to abase themselves before the great God.

4. The people conformed to the example of the king, nay it should seem they led the way, for they first began to put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them, even to the least of them, ver. 5. The least of them, that had least to lose in the overthrow of the city, yet did not think themselves unconcerned in the alarm; and the greatest of them that had used to lie at ease and live in state, did not think it below them to put on the marks of humiliation. The wearing of sackcloth, especially to those who were used to fine linen, was a very uneasy thing, and they would not have done it, if they had not had a deep sense of their sin, and their danger by reason of sin, which hereby they designed to express. Note, Those that would not be ruined must be humbled; that would not destroy their souls, must afflict their souls; when God's judgments threaten us, we are concerned to humble ourselves under his mighty hand; and though bodily exercise alone profits nothing, and a man's spreading sackcloth and ashes under him, if that be all, is but a jest, it is the heart that God looks at, Isaiah lviii. 5. yet on solemn days of humiliation, when God in his providences calls to mourning and girding with sackcloth, we must by the outward expressions of inward sorrow glorify God with our bodies; at least by laying aside the ornaments.

5. A general fast was proclaimed and observed throughout that great city, ver. 7, 8, 9. It was ordered by the decree of the king and his nobles, the whole legislative power concurred in appointing it, and the whole body of the people concurred in observing it, and both these ways it became a national act, and it was necessary it should be so when it was to prevent a national



national ruin. We have here the contents of this proclamation, and it is very observable. See here,

1. What it is that is required by it. (1.) That the *fast* (properly so called) be very strictly observed. On the day appointed for this solemnity, *Let neither man nor beast taste any thing*, let them not take the least refreshment, no not so much as *drink water*; let them not plead they cannot fast so long without prejudice to their health, or that they cannot bear it, let them try for once; what if they do *feel it* an uneasiness, and *feel from it* for some time after, it is better to submit to that than be wanting in any act or instance of that repentance which is necessary to save a sinking city. Let them make themselves uneasy in body by *putting on sackcloth*, as well as by *fasting*, to shew how *uneasy* they are in mind through sorrow for sin and the fear of divine wrath. Even the *beasts* must do penance as well as man; because they had been made *subject to vanity*, as instruments of man's sin; and that either by their *complaints*, or their *silent pining* for want of meat, they might stir up their owners, and those that attended them, to the expressions of sorrow and humiliation. Those cattle that were kept within doors must not be *fed and watered* as usual, because *no meat* must be *stirring* on that day: Things of that kind must be forgotten, and not minded. As when the *psalmist* was intent upon the praises of God, he called upon the inferior creatures to join with him therein; so when the Ninevites were full of sorrow for sin, and dread of God's judgments, they would have the inferior creatures concur with them in the expressions of it. The beasts that used to be covered with rich and fine trappings, which were the pride of their masters, and theirs too must now be *covered with sackcloth*, for the great men will (as becomes them) lay aside their equipage. (2.) With their fasting and mourning they must join prayer and supplication to God; for the fasting is designed to fit the body for the service of the soul in the duty of prayer, which is the main matter, and to which the other is but preparatory or subservient. *Let them cry mightily to God*; let even the brute creatures do it according to their capacity, let their cries and moans for want of food be graciously construed as cries to God; as the cries of the *young ravens* are, Job xxxviii. 41. and of the *young lions*, Psalm civ. 21. But especially let the men, women, and children, *cry to God*, let them *cry mightily* for the pardon of the sins that cry against them, and the preventing of the judgments which were by Jonah cried against them.

It was time to *cry to God*, when there was but a step between them and ruin, high time to seek the Lord. And in prayer we must *cry mightily*, with a fixedness of thought, firmness of faith, and fervour of pious and devout affections; by *crying mightily* we wrestle with God, we take hold of him, and we are concerned to do so when he is not only departing from us as a friend, but coming forth against us as an enemy. It therefore concerns us in prayer to *stir up all that is within us*. Yet this is not all. (3.) They must to their fasting and praying and reformation add amendment of life. *Let them turn every one from his evil way*, the evil way he hath chosen, the evil way he is addicted to and walks in, the evil way of his heart, and the evil way of his conversation, and particularly *from the violence that is in their hands*; let them restore what they have unjustly taken, and make reparation for what wrong they have done, and let them not any more *oppress* those they have power over, or *defraud* those they have dealings with; let the men in authority at the court end of the town *turn from the violence that is in their hands*, and not *decree unrighteous decrees*, or give wrong judgment upon appeals made to them. Let the men of business, at the trading-end of the town, *turn from the violence in their hands*, and use no unjust weights or measures, nor impose upon the ignorance or necessity of those they trade with.

Note, It is not enough to fast for sin, but we must fast from sin, and in order to the success of our prayers must no more regard iniquity in our hearts, Psal. lxxvi. 18. This is the only fast that God hath chosen, and will accept, Isa. lviii. 6. Zech. vii. 5—9. The work of a fast-day is not done with the day; no, then the hardest and most needful part of the work begins, which is to turn from sin, and to live a new life, and not return with the dog to his vomit.

2. Upon what inducement this fast is proclaimed and religiously observed, ver. 9. *Who can tell if God will return and repent?* Observe, (1.) What it is that they hope for; that God will upon their repenting and turning *change his way* towards them, and *revoke his sentence* against them, that he will *turn from his fierce anger*, which they own they deserve, and yet humbly and earnestly deprecate; and that thus their ruin will be prevented and they perish not.

They cannot object against the equity of the judgment, they pretend not to *set it aside* by appealing to a higher court, but hope in God himself that he will *repent*, and that his own mercy (to which they fly) shall *rejoice against judgment*. They believe that God is justly angry with them, and that their sin being very heinous, his anger is very fierce; and that if he proceed against them there is no remedy, but they die, they perish, they all perish and are undone, for who knows the power of his anger? It is not therefore the threatened *overthrow* that they pray for the prevention of, but the *anger of God*, that they pray for the turning away of. As when we pray for the favour of God we pray for all good, so when we pray against the wrath of God we pray against all evil. (2.) What degree of hope they had of it. *Who can tell if God will turn to us?* Jonah had not told them, they had not among them any other prophets to tell them, so that they could not be so confident of finding mercy upon their repentance, as we may be that have the promise and oath of God to depend upon, and especially the merit and mediation of Christ to trust to for pardon upon repentance. Yet they had a general notion of the goodness of God's nature, his mercy to man, and his being pleased with the repentance and conversion of sinners; and from this they raised some hopes that he would spare them; they dare not *presume*, but they will not *despair*. Note, Hope of mercy is the great encouragement to repentance and reformation; and though there be but some *glimmerings* of hope mixed with great fears arising from a sense of our own sinfulness and unworthiness, and long abuse of divine patience, yet they may serve to quicken and engage our serious repentance and reformation. Let us boldly cast ourselves at the footstool of free grace, resolving that if we perish we will perish there; yet who knows but God will look upon us with compassion?

2. Here is a wonder of divine mercy in the sparing of these Ninevites, upon their repentance, ver. 10. *God saw their works*, he not only *heard their good works* by which they professed repentance, but saw their good works by which they *brought forth fruits meet for repentance*, he saw that they *turned from their evil way*, and that was the thing he looked for and required; if he had not seen that, their *fasting and sackcloth* would have been as nothing in his account; he saw there was among them a general conviction of their sins, and a general resolution not to return to them, and that for some days they lived better, and there was a new face of things upon the city; and this he was greatly well pleased with. Note, God takes notice of every instance of the reformation of sinners, even those instances that fall not under the cognizance and observation of the world. He sees who *turn from their evil way*, and who do not, and meets those with favour that meet him in a sincere conversion; when they repent of the evil of sin committed by

them, he repents of the evil of judgment pronounced against them. Thus he spared Nineveh, and did not the evil which he said he would do against it. Here were no sacrifices offered to God, that we read of, to make atonement for sin, but the *sacrifice of God is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart*, such as the Ninevites now had, is what he will not despise, it is what he will give countenance to and put honour upon.

## C H A P. IV.

We read with a great deal of pleasure in the close of the foregoing chapter concerning the repentance of Nineveh, but in this chapter we read with a great deal of uneasiness concerning the sin of Jonah; and as there is joy in heaven and earth for the conversion of sinners, so there is grief for the follies and infirmities of saints: In all the book of God we scarce find a servant of the Lord, (and such a one we are sure Jonah was, for the scripture calls him so) so very much out of temper as he is here, so very peevish and provoking to God himself. In the first chapter we had him fleeing from the face of God, but here we have him in effect flying in the face of God; and which is more grieving to us, there we had an account of his repentance and return to God, but here, though no doubt he did repent, yet, as in Solomon's case, no account is left us of his recovering himself; but while we read with wonder of his perverseness, we read with no less wonder of God's tenderness towards him, by which it appeared he had not cast him off. Here is, (1.) Jonah's repining at God's mercy to Nineveh, and the fret he was in about it, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) The gentle reproof God gave him for it, ver. 4. (3.) Jonah's discontent at the withering of the gourd, and his justifying of himself in that discontent, ver. 5—9. (4.) God's improving of it for his conviction, that he ought not to be angry at the sparing of Nineveh, ver. 10, 11. Man's badness and God's goodness serve here for a foil to each other, that the former may appear the more exceeding sinful, and the latter the more exceeding gracious.

1. BUT it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. 2. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. 3. Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. 4. ¶ Then, said the LORD, Dost thou well to be angry?

See here, 1. How unjustly Jonah quarrelled with God for his mercy to Nineveh upon their repentance. This gives us occasion to suspect that Jonah had only delivered the message of wrath against the Ninevites, and had not at all assisted or encouraged them in their repentance, as one would have thought he should have done: for when they did repent and found mercy,

1. Jonah grudged them the mercy they found, ver. 1. *It displeased Jonah exceedingly*, and would you think it? *He was very angry*; was in a great heat about it. It was very ill, (1.) That he had so little government of himself as to be *displeased and very angry*; he had no rule over his own spirit, and therefore as a city broken down, lay exposed to temptations and snares. (2.) That he had so little reverence to God as to be *displeased and angry* at what he did; as David was when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza; whatever pleased God should please us, and though we cannot account for it, yet we must acquiesce in it. (3.) That he had so little affection to men as to be *displeased and very angry* at the conversion of the Ninevites, and their reception into the divine favour.

This was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees who murmured at our Saviour because he entertained publicans and sinners; but *is our eye evil*, because his is good? But why was Jonah so uneasy at it, that the Ninevites repented and were spared? It cannot be expected that we should give any good reason for a thing so very absurd and unreasonable; no, nor any thing that has the face or colour of a reason; but we may conjecture what the provocation was; *hot spirits* are usually *high spirits*, only by pride comes contention both with God and man.

It was a point of honour that Jonah stood upon, and that made him angry. (1.) He was jealous for the honour of his country; the repentance and reformation of Nineveh shamed the obstinacy of Israel that repented not, but *hated to be reformed*; and the favour God shewed to these Gentiles upon their repentance was an ill omen to the Jewish nation, as if they should be (as at length they were) rejected and cast out of the church, and the Gentiles substituted in their room.

When it was intimated to St. Peter himself, that he should make no difference between Jews and Gentiles, he startled at the thing, and said, *Not so, Lord*; no marvel then that Jonah looked upon it with regret that Nineveh should become a favourite. Jonah herein had a zeal for God as the God of Israel in a particular manner, but not according to knowledge. Note, Many are displeased with God under pretence of concern for his glory. (2.) He was jealous for his own honour; fearing, lest if Nineveh was not destroyed within forty days he should be accounted a false prophet, and *stigmatized* accordingly: Whereas he needed not be under any discontent about that, for in the threatening of ruin it was implied, that for the preventing of it they should repent, and if they did it should be prevented.

And no one will complain of being deceived by him that is better than his word; and he would rather gain honour among them by being instrumental to save them, than fall under any disgrace. But melancholy men, (and such a one Jonah seems to have been) are apt to make themselves uneasy, by fancying evils to themselves that are not nor are ever likely to be. Most of our frets, as well as our frights, are owing to the power of imagination; and those are to be pitied as perfect bond-slaves that are under the power of such a tyrant.

2. He quarrelled with God about it; when his heart was hot within him, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips; and here he tells us what he said, ver. 2. 3. He prayed unto the Lord, but it is a very awkward prayer, not like that which he prayed in the fish's belly; for affliction teacheth us to pray submissively; which Jonah now forgot to do. Being in discontent he applied himself to the duty of prayer, as he used to do in his troubles; but his corruptions got head of his graces, and when he should have been praying for benefit by the mercy of God himself, he was complaining of the benefit others had by that mercy. Nothing could be spoken more unbecomingly.

(1.) He now begins to justify himself in fleeing from the presence of the Lord when he was first ordered to go to Nineveh, for which he had before



with good reason condemned himself. *Lord, faith he, was not this my saying when I was in my own country? Did I not foresee, that if I went to preach to Nineveh, they would repent, and thou wouldest forgive them, and then thy word would be reflected upon and reproached as yet and nay.* What a strange sort of man was Jonah to dread the success of his ministry! Many have been tempted to withdraw from their work because they have despaired of doing good by it; but Jonah declined preaching because he was afraid of doing good by it: and still he perils in the same corrupt notion, for it seems the whale's belly itself could not cure him of it. It was his saying when he was in his own country, but it was an *ill saying*; yet here he stands to it; and, very unlike the other prophets, desires the *woeful day* which he had foretold, and grieves because it doth not come. Even Christ's disciples know not what manner of spirit they are of; they did not who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did not receive them, much less did Jonah, who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did receive him, Luke ix. 55.

Jonah thinks he has reason to complain of that when it is done, which he was before afraid of, to hard is it to get a root of bitterness plucked out of the mind when once it is fastened there. And why did Jonah expect that God would spare Nineveh? *Because I know that thou wast a gracious God in judgment and easily pleased, that thou wast slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.* All this is very true; and Jonah could not but know it by God's proclamation of his name, and the experiences of all ages, but it is *strange* and very *unaccountable*, that that which all the saints had made the matter of their joy and praise, Jonah should make the matter of reflection upon God; as if that were an imperfection of the divine nature, which is indeed the greatest glory of it, that God is *gracious and merciful*. The servant that said, *I know thee to be a hard man*, said that which was *false*, and yet had it been *true* it was not the proper matter of a complaint, but Jonah, though he faith what is *true*, yet speaking it by way of reproach, speaks very *absurdly*.

Those have a spirit of contention and contradiction indeed that can find in their hearts to quarrel with the goodness of God, and his sparing pardoning mercy, to which we all owe it that we are *out of hell*. This is making that to be to us a *favour of death unto death*, which ought to be a *favour of life unto life*.

(2.) In a passion he wishes for death, ver. 3. A strange expression of his causeless passion, *Now, O Lord, take I beseech thee, my life from me.* If Nineveh must live let me die, rather than see thy word and mine disproved, rather than see the glory of Israel transferred to the Gentiles; as if there were not grace enough in God both for Jews and Gentiles, or as if his countrymen were the farther off from mercy for the Ninevites being taken into favour. When the prophet Elijah had laboured in vain, he wished he might die, and it was his infirmity, 1 Kings xix. 4. But Jonah labours to good purpose, saves a great city from ruin, and yet wisheth he might die, as if having done much good he were afraid of living to do more; he sees of the *travail of his soul*, and is *dissatisfied*: What a *perverse spirit* is mingled with every word he faith! When Jonah was brought alive out of the whale's belly, he thought life a very *valuable* mercy, and was thankful to that God who brought up his life from corruption, chap. ii. 6. and a great blessing his life had been to Nineveh, yet now for that very reason it is become a burden to himself, and he begs to be eased of it; pleading it is *better for me to die than to live*: Such a word as this may be the language of grace, as it was in Paul, who desired to depart and be with Christ, which is *far better*: but here it was the language of folly and passion and strong corruption; and so much the worse.

(1.) That Jonah was now in the midst of his usefulness, and therefore fit to live; he was one whose ministry God wonderfully owned and prospered, the conversion of Nineveh might give him hopes of being instrumental to convert the whole kingdom of Assyria; it was therefore very absurd for him to wish he might die when he had a prospect of living to so good a purpose, and could be so *ill spared*.

(2.) That he was now so much out of temper and therefore unfit to die. How durst he think of dying and going to appear before God's judgment-seat when he was actually quarrelling with him? Was this a frame of spirit proper for a man to go out of the world in? But those who passionately desire death, commonly have least reason to do it, as being very much unprepared for it. Our business is to get ready to die by doing the work of life, and then refer ourselves to God to take away our life when and how he pleaseth.

2. See how justly God reproved Jonah for this heat that he was in, ver. 4. The Lord said, *Doest thou well to be angry? Is doing well a displeasure to thee?* So some read it; What? dost thou repent of thy good deeds? God might justly have rejected him for this impious heat he was in, might justly have taken him at his word, and have struck him dead when he wished to die, but he vouchsafes to reason with him for his conviction, and to reduce him to a better temper: As the father of the prodigal reasoned with his elder son when, as Jonah here, he murmured at the remission and reception of his brother. *Doest thou well to be angry?* See how mildly the great God speaks to this foolish man, to teach us to *rejoice* those that are fallen with a *spirit of meekness*, and with soft answers to *turn away wrath*. God appeals to himself and to his own conscience, *Doest thou well?* thou knowest thou dost not.

We should often put this question to ourselves, *Is it well to say thus, to do thus?* can I justify it? must I not *unsay* it, and *undo* it again by repentance, or be undone for ever? Alk,

(1.) *Do I well to be angry?* when passion is up let it meet with this check, Do I well to be so soon angry, so often angry, so long angry, to put myself into such a heat, and to give others such ill language in my anger? Is this well that I suffer these headstrong passions to get dominion over me?

(2.) *Do I well to be angry* at the mercy of God to repenting sinners? That was Jonah's crime: Do we well to be angry at that which is so much for the glory of God, and the advancement of his kingdom among men? To be angry at that which angels rejoice in? and for which abundant thanksgivings will be rendered to God? We do ill to be angry at that grace which we ourselves need, and are undone without; if room were not left for repentance, and hope given of pardon upon repentance, what would become of us? Let the conversion of sinners, which is the joy of heaven, be our joy, and never our grief.

5. So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. 6. And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. 7. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. 8. And it came to pass, when the sun did

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arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, *It is better for me to die than to live.* 9. And God said to Jonah, *Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?* And he said, *I do well to be angry even unto death.* 10. Then said the LORD, *Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:* 11. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Jonah persists here in his discontent, for the beginning of strife both with God and man is as the letting forth of waters, the breach grows wider and wider, and when passion gets head, it is waste water; it should therefore be silenced and suppressed at first. We have here,

1. Jonah's sudden expectation of the fate of Nineveh. We may suppose the Ninevites, giving credit to the message he brought, were ready to give entertainment to the messenger that brought it, and to show him respect, that they would have bid him welcome to the best of their houses and tables; but Jonah was out of humour; would not accept their kindness, nor carry it towards them with common civility; which one might have feared would have prejudiced them against him and his word: but when there is not only the treasure put into earthen vessels, but the trust lodged with men subject to like passions as we are, and yet the point gained, it must be owned that the excellency of the power appears so much the more to be of God and not of man.

Jonah retires, goes out of the city, sits alone, and keeps silence, because he sees the Ninevites repent and reform, ver. 5. Perhaps he told those about him that he went out of the city for fear of perishing in the ruins of it; but he went to see what would become of the city; as Abraham went up to see what would become of Sodom, Gen. xix. 27. The forty days were now expiring or expired, and Jonah hopes that if Nineveh be not overthrown, yet that some judgment or other shall come upon it sufficient to save his credit; however it is with great uneasiness that he waits the issue. He will not sojourn in a house, expecting it would fall upon his head, but he makes him a booth of the boughs of trees, and sits in that though there he would lie exposed to wind and weather. Note. It is common for those that have fretful, uneasy spirits, industriously to create inconveniences to themselves, that resolving to complain, they still have something to complain of.

2. God's gracious provision for his shelter and refreshment, when he thus foolishly afflicted himself, and was still adding yet more and more to his own affliction, ver. 6. Jonah was sitting in his booth, fretting at the cold of the night, and the heat of the day, which were both grievous to him, and God might have said it is his own choice, his own doing, a house of his own building, let him make the best of it; but he looked on him with compassion, as the tender mother doth on the froward child, and relieved him against the grievances which he by his own wilfulness created to himself.

He prepared a gourd, a plant with broad leaves, and full of them, that suddenly grew up and covered his hut or booth, so as to keep off much of the injury of the cold and heat. It was a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief, that being refreshed in body he might the better guard against the uneasiness of his mind, which outward crosses and troubles are often the occasion and increase of. See how tender God is of his people in their afflictions, yea, though they are foolish and froward, nor is he extreme to mark what they do amiss.

God had before prepared a great fish to secure Jonah from the injuries of the water, and here a great gourd to secure him from the injuries of the air, for he is the protector of his people against evils of every kind: his command of plants as well as animals, and can soon procure them to make them serve his purposes: can make their growth sudden, which in a course of nature is slow and gradual. A gourd one would think was but a slender fortification at the best, yet Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd; for,

(1.) It was really at that time a great comfort to him: A thing in itself small and inconsiderable, yet coming seasonably may be to us a very valuable blessing. A gourd in the right place, may do us more service than a cedar. The least creatures may be great plagues (as flies and lice were to Pharaoh) or great comforts, as the gourd to Jonah, according as God is pleased to make them.

(2.) He being now much under the power of imagination, took a greater complacency in it than there was cause for. He was exceeding glad of it, was proud of it, and triumphed in it.

Note, Persons of strong passions, as they are apt to be cast down with a trifle that crosses them, so they are apt to be lifted up with a trifle that pleases them. A small toy will serve sometimes to pacify a cross child, as the gourd did Jonah: but wisdom and grace would teach us both to weep for our troubles as though we wept not, and to rejoice in our comforts as though we rejoiced not. Creature comforts we ought to enjoy and be thankful for, but we need not be exceeding glad of them, it is God only that must be our exceeding joy, Psalm xliii.

3. The sudden loss of this provision God had made for his refreshment, and the return of his trouble, ver. 7, 8. God that had provided comfort for him, provided also an affliction for him in that very thing which was his comfort; the affliction did not come by chance, but by divine direction and appointment.

(1.) God prepared a worm to wither the gourd. He that gave took away, and Jonah ought to have blessed his name in both; but because when he took the comfort of the gourd, he did not give God the praise of it, he deprived him of the benefit of it, and justly. See what all our creature comforts are, and what we may expect them to be; they are gourds, have their root in the earth, are but a thin and slender defence compared with the rock of ages; they are withering things, they perish in the using, and we are soon deprived of the comfort of them. The gourd withered the next day after it sprung up; our comforts come forth like flowers and are soon cut down; when we please ourselves most with them, and promise ourselves most from them, we are disappointed. A little thing withers them, a small worm at the root destroys a large gourd. Something unseen and undiscerned doth it; our gourds wither and we know not what to attribute it to. And perhaps those wither first that we have been more exceeding glad of; that proves least safe that is most dear.

God did not send an angel to pluck up Jonah's gourd, but sent a worm to wither it; there it grew still, but it stood him in no stead: Perhaps our creature comforts are continued to us, but they are embittered; the creature continued, but the comfort gone; and the remains or ruins of it rather do but upbraid us with our folly in being exceeding glad of it.



(2.) He prepared a *wind* to make Jonah feel the want of the gourd, *ver.* 3. It was a *vehement east-wind*, which drove the heat of the rising sun violently upon the head of Jonah. This wind was not as a fan to abate the heat, but as bellows to make it more intense. Thus poor Jonah lay open to sun and wind.

4. The farther fret that this put Jonah into, *ver.* 8. he *fainted*, and *wished in himself that he might die*. If the gourd be killed, if the gourd be dead, kill me too, *Let me die with the gourd*. Foolish man, that thinks his life bound up in the life of a weed.

Note, It is just that those who love to complain should never be left without something to complain of, that their folly may be *manifested* and *corrected*, and if possible *cured*. And see here how the passions that run into an extreme one way, commonly run into an extreme the other way; Jonah that was in transports of joy when the gourd flourished, is in pangs of grief when the gourd is withered: Inordinate affection lays a foundation for inordinate affliction; and what we are *over-fond* of when we have it, we are apt to *over-grieve* for when we lose it, and we may see our folly in both.

5. The rebuke God gave him for this; he again reasoned with him, *Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?* *ver.* 9. Note, The withering of a gourd is a thing which it doth not become us to be angry at; when afflicting providences deprive us of our relations, possessions, enjoyments, we must bear it patiently; must not be angry at God, must not be angry *for the gourd*; it is comparatively but a *small loss*, the loss of a *shadow*, that is the most we can make of it. It was a *gourd*, a withering thing, we could expect no other but that it should *wither*. Our being angry for the withering of it will not *recover* it, we ourselves shall shortly wither like it. If one *gourd* be withered, another *gourd* may spring up in the room of it; but that which should especially *silence* our discontent is, that though our *gourd* be *gone*, our *God* is not *gone*, and there is enough in him to *make up* all our losses.

Let us therefore own that we *do ill*, that we *do very ill*, to be angry for the *gourd*; and let us under such events quiet ourselves as a child that is *weaned from his mother*.

6. His justification of his passion and discontent; and it is very strange, *ver.* 9. he said, *I do well to be angry even unto death*. It is bad to speak amiss, yet if it be *in haste*, if what is said amiss be presently recalled and unsaid again, it is the more *excusable*; but to speak amiss and stand to it, is bad indeed. So Jonah did here, though God himself *rebuked him*, and by appealing to his conscience expected he should have *rebuked himself*.

See what brutish things ungoverned passions are, and how much it is our interest, and ought to be our endeavour, to chain up these *roaring lions* and *ranging bears*. Sin and death are two very dreadful things, yet Jonah in his heat makes light of them both.

(1.) He has so little regard for God as to fly in the face of his authority, and to say *he did well* in that which God said was *ill done*. Passion often over-rules conscience, and forces it, when it is appealed to, to give a false judgment, as Jonah here did.

(2.) He has so little regard to himself as to abandon *his own life*, and to think it no harm to indulge his passion even to *death*, to *kill himself* with fretting. We read of *wrath* that *kills the foolish man*, and *envy* that *slays the silly one*, Job v. 2. and foolish silly ones indeed they are that cut their own throats with their own passions, and fret themselves into consumptions and other weakneses, and put themselves into fevers with their own intemperate heats.

7. The improvement of it against him for his conviction, that he did ill to murmur at the sparing of Nineveh. Out of his own mouth God will judge him; and we have reason to think it overcame him; for he made no reply, but we hope returned to his right mind, and *recovered* his temper though he could not *keep* it, and all was well.

Now let us see how God argued with him, *ver.* 10, 11. *Thou hast had pity on the gourd*, hast spared it, (to the word is) didst what thou couldst, and wouldst have done more to keep it alive, and saidst, *What pity it is that this gourd should ever wither; and should not I then spare Nineveh?* Should not I have as much compassion upon that as thou hadst upon the gourd, and forbid the *earthquake* which would ruin that, as thou wouldst have forbidden the *worm* that withered the gourd? Consider,

(1.) The gourd thou hadst pity on was but *one*, but the inhabitants of Nineveh, I have pity on, are *numerous*; it is a *great city* and very populous, as appears by the number of the infants, suppose from two years old and under, there are a *hundred and twenty thousand* such in Nineveh, that are not come to so much use of understanding as to know their *right hand* from their *left*, for they are yet but babes.

These are taken notice of, because the age of infants is commonly looked upon as the age of innocency. So many there were in Nineveh that had not been guilty of any actual transgression, and consequently had not themselves contributed to the common guilt, and yet, if Nineveh be *overthrown*, will all be involved in the common calamity; and *shall not I spare* Nineveh then with an eye to them? God has a tender regard to little children; and is ready to pity and succour them, nay, here a *whole city* is spared for their sakes; which may encourage parents to present their children to God by faith and prayer, that though they are not capable of doing him any service, for they cannot discern *between their right hand and their left*; between good and evil, sin and duty, yet they are capable of participating of his favours, and of obtaining salvation.

The great Saviour discovered a particular kindness for the children that were *brought to him*, when he *took them up in his arms*, *put his hands upon them*, and *blessed them*. Nay, God took notice of the abundance of *cattle* too that were in Nineveh, which he had more reason to pity and spare than Jonah had to pity and to spare the *gourd*, inasmuch as the *animal life* is more excellent than the *vegetable*.

(2.) The gourd which Jonah was concerned for was *none of his own*, it was that for which he *did not labour*, nor *made it to grow*; but the persons in Nineveh, whom God had compassion on, were all the *work of his own hands*, whose beings he was the author of, whose lives he was the preserver of, whom he planted, and *made to grow*; he *made them*, and his they were, and therefore he had much more reason to have compassion on them, for he cannot *despise the work of his own hands*, Job x. 3. and thus Job there argues with him, *ver.* 8, 9. *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me, have made me as the clay, and wilt thou destroy me, wilt thou bring me into dust again?* and thus he here argues with himself.

(3.) The gourd which Jonah had pity on was of a sudden growth, and therefore of less value, it *came up in a night*, it was the *son of a night*, (so the word is) but Nineveh is an ancient city, of many ages standing, and therefore cannot be so easily *given up*, the persons I spare have been *many years* in growing up, *not so soon reared as the gourd*; and shall not I then have pity on them, that have been so many years the care of my providence, so many years my tenants?

(4.) The *gourd* which Jonah had pity on *perished in a night*, it withered and there was an end of it; but the precious souls in Nineveh, that God has pity on, are not so *short-lived*, they are *immortal*, and therefore to be carefully and tenderly *considered*. One soul is of more value than the whole world, and the gain of the world will not countervail the loss of it, surely then *one soul* is of more value than *many gourds*, of more value than *many sparrows*; so God accounts, and so should we, and therefore have a greater concern for the *children of men*, than for any of the *inferior creatures*, and for our own and other precious souls, than for any of the riches and enjoyments of this world.

From all this we may learn, (1.) That though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it, but will take a course effectually to shew them their error, and to bring them to themselves and to their right mind again. We have reason to hope that Jonah after this was well reconciled to the sparing of Nineveh, and was as well pleased with it as he had ever been *displeased*.

(2.) That God will *justify himself* in the methods of his grace towards repenting returning sinners, as well as in the course his justice takes with them that persist in their rebellion: though there be those that murmur at the mercy of God because they do not understand it, for his thoughts and ways therein are as far above ours as heaven above the earth, yet he will make it evident that therein he acts like himself, and will be *justified when he speaks*. See what pains he takes with Jonah to convince him that it was very fit Nineveh should be spared; Jonah had said, *I do well to be angry*, but he could not prove it: God saith it, and proves it, *I do well to be merciful*; and it is a great encouragement to poor sinners to hope that they shall find mercy with him, that he is so ready to *justify himself* in shewing mercy, and to triumph in those whom he makes the monuments of it, against those whose eyes are evil because his is good. Such *murmurers* shall be made to understand this doctrine; that how narrow soever their souls, their principles are, and how willing soever they are to *ingross* divine grace to themselves and those of their own way, there is one *Lord over all*, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him, and in every nation, in Nineveh as well as in Israel, *He that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him*; he that repents and turns from his evil way shall find mercy with him.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JONAH.



AN  
E X P O S I T I O N,  
WITH  
P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

M I C A H.

We shall have some account of this prophet in the first verse of the book of his prophecy; and therefore shall here only observe, that being cotemporary with the prophet Isaiah (only that he began to prophesy a little after him) there is a near resemblance between that prophet's prophecy and this; and there is a prediction of the advancement and establishment of the gospel church, which both of them have, almost in the same words, that out of the mouth of two such witnesses so great a word might be established. Compare *Isa. ii. 2, 3*, with *Micah iv. 1, 2*. Isaiah's prophecy is said to be concerning Judah and Jerusalem, but Micah's concerning Samaria and Jerusalem; for though this prophecy be dated only by the reigns of the kings of Judah, yet it refers to the kingdom of Israel, the approaching ruin of which, in the captivity of the ten tribes, he plainly foretells and sadly laments. What we find here in writing, was but an abstract of the sermons he preached during the reigns of three kings. The scope of the whole is, (1.) To convince sinners of their sins, by setting them in order before them, charging both Israel and Judah with idolatry, covetousness, oppression, contempt of the word of God; and their rulers especially, both in church and state, with the abuse of their power: and also by shewing them the judgments of God ready to break in upon them for their sins. (2.) To comfort God's people with promises of mercy and deliverance, especially with an assurance of the coming of the Messiah, and of the grace of the gospel through him. It is remarkable concerning this prophecy, and confirms its authority, that we find two quotations out of it, made publicly upon very solemn occasions, and both referring to very great events. (1.) One is, a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, *chap. iii. 12*, which we find quoted in the Old Testament, by the *elders of the land*, *Jer. xxvi. 17, 18*. in justification of Jeremiah, when he foretold the judgments of God coming upon Jerusalem, and to stay the proceedings of the court against him, Micah (say they) foretold, that *Zion should be ploughed as a field*, and Hezekiah did not put him to death, why then should we punish Jeremiah for saying the same? (2.) Another is, a prediction of the birth of Christ, *chap. v. 2*, which we find quoted in the New Testament, by the *chief priests and scribes of the people*, in answer to Herod's enquiry, *where Christ should be born?* *Matt. ii. 5, 6*. for still we find, that to him bear all the prophets witness.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The title of the book, *ver. 1*. and a preface demanding attention, *ver. 2*. (2.) Warning given of desolating judgments, hastening upon the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, *ver. 3, 4*. and all for sin, *ver. 5*. (3.) The particulars of the destruction intimated in, *ver. 6, 7*. (4.) The greatness of the destruction illustrated, (1.) By the prophet's sorrow for it, *ver. 8, 9*. (2.) By the general sorrow that should be for it, in the several places that must expect to share in it, *ver. 10—16*. These prophecies of Micah might well be called his lamentations.

**I.** THE word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. 2. Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. 3. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. 4. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. 5. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem? 6. Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. 7. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate; for she gathereth it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.

Here is, 1. A general account of this prophet and his prophecy, *ver. 1*. This is prefixed for the satisfaction of all that read and hear the prophecy of this book, who will give the more credit to it, when they know the author and his authority. (1.) The prophecy is the word of the Lord, it is a divine revelation. Note, What is written in the Bible, and what is preached by the ministers of Christ, according to what is written there, must be heard and received; not as the word of dying men, which we may be judges of, but as the word of the living God, which we must be judged by, for so it is. This word of the Lord came to the prophet, came plainly, came powerfully, came in a preventing way, and he saw it, saw the vision in which it was conveyed to him, saw the things themselves which he foretold, with as much clearness and certainty as if they had been already accomplished. (2.) The prophet is Micah the Morasthite; his name Micah a contraction of Micaiah, the name of a prophet some ages before, in Ahab's time, *1 Kings xxii. 8*. his surname, the Morasthite, born or lived at Morasth, which is mentioned here, *ver. 14*. or Mareslah, which is mentioned, *ver. 15*, and *Josh. xv. 41*. The place of his abode is mentioned, that any one might enquire in that place, at that time, and might find that there was or had been such a one there, who was generally reputed

to be a prophet. (3.) The date of his prophecy is in the reigns of the three kings of Judah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; Ahaz was one of the worst of Judah's kings, and Hezekiah one of the best; such variety of times pass over God's ministers, times that frown, and times that smile, to each of which they must study to accommodate themselves, and to arm themselves against the temptations of both. The promises and threatenings of this book are interwoven, by which it appears, that even in the wicked reign he preached comfort, and said to the righteous then, it shall be well with them; and in the pious reign he preached conviction, and said to the wicked then, it shall be ill with them; for, however the times change, the word of the Lord is still the same. (4.) The parties concerned in this prophecy; it is concerning Samaria and Jerusalem, the head cities of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, under the influence of which the kingdoms themselves were. Though the ten tribes have deserted the houses both of David and Aaron, yet God is pleased to send prophets to them.

2. A very solemn introduction to the following prophecy, *ver. 2*. In which, (1.) The people are summoned to draw near and give their attendance, as upon a court of judicature, *hear all ye people*. Note, Where God has a mouth to speak we must have an ear to hear; we all must, for we are all concerned in what is delivered. *Hear, ye people, all of them*, so the margin reads it; all ye that are now within hearing, and all others that hear it at second hand. It is an unusual construction, but those words with which Micah begins his prophecy, are the very same in the original with those wherewith Micaiah ended his, *1 Kings xxii. 28*. (2.) The earth is called upon, with all that therein is, to hear what the prophet has to say. *Hearken, O earth*. The earth shall be made to shake under the stroke and weight of the judgments coming; sooner will the earth hear than this stupid, senseless people; but God will be heard when he pleads. If the church, and those in it will not hear, the earth and those in it shall, and shame them. (3.) God himself is appealed to, and his omniscience, power, and justice, are vouchsafed in testimony against this people. *Let the Lord God be witness against you*; a witness that you had fair warning given you, that your prophets did their duty faithfully as watchmen, but you would not take the warning; let the accomplishment of the prophecy be a witness against your contempt and disbelief of it, and prove to your conviction and confusion that it was the word of God, and no word of his shall fall to the ground. Note, God himself will be a witness by the judgment of his hand, against those that would not receive his testimony in the judgment of his mouth. He will be a witness from his holy temple in heaven, when he comes down to execute judgment, *ver. 3*, against those which turned a deaf ear to his oracles, wherein he witnessed to them, out of his holy temple at Jerusalem.

3. A terrible prediction of destroying judgments, which should come upon Judah and Israel; which had its accomplishment soon after in Israel, and at length in Judah: for it is foretold, (1.) That God himself will appear against them, *ver. 3*. They boast of themselves, and their relation to God, as if that would secure them; but though God never deceives the faith of the upright, he will disappoint the presumption of the hypocrites, for behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, quits his mercy-seat, where they thought they had him fast, and prepares his throne for judgment; his glory departs, for they drive it from them. God's way towards this people had long been a way of mercy, but now he changeth his way, he comes out of his place, and will come down. He seemed to retire, as one regardless of what was done, but now he will shew himself, he will rent the heavens, and will come down; not as sometimes in surprising mercies, but in surprising judgments: to do things not for them but against them, which they looked not for, *Isa. lxix. 1—lxxvi. 21*. (2.) That when the Creator appears against them, it shall be in vain for any creature to appear for them. He will tread with contempt and disdain upon the high places of the earth, upon all the powers that are advanced in competition with him, or in opposition to him; and he will so tread upon them, as to tread them down and level them. High places, set up for the worship of idols or for military fortifications, shall all be trodden down, and trampled into the dust. Do men trust to the height and strength of the mountains and rocks, as if they were sufficient



sufficient to *bear up* their hopes, and bear off their fears? They shall be *melted under them*, melted down as wax before the fire, Psalm lxxv. 2. Do they trust to the fruitfulness of the valleys and their products? They shall be *cleft* or rent, with those *fiery streams* that shall come pouring down from the mountains when they are melted: they shall be ploughed and washed away, as the ground is by the waters that are poured down a steep place. God is said to *cleave the earth with rivers*, Hab. iii. 9. Neither men of high degree, as the mountains, nor men of low degree, as the valleys, shall be able to secure either themselves or the land from the judgments of God, when they are sent with commission to lay all waste, and like a *scouring rain*, to leave no food, Prov. xxviii. 3. This is applied particularly to the head city of Israel, which they hoped would be a protection to the kingdom, ver. 6. I will make *Samaria* that is now a rich and populous city, as a heap of the field, as a heap of dung, laid there to be spread, or as a heap of stones gathered together to be carried away, and as plantings of a vineyard, as hillocks of earth raised to plant vines in: God will make of that city a heap, of that defended city, a ruin, Isa. xxv. 2. Their altars had been as *heaps in the furrows of the fields*, Hof. vii. 11; and now their houses shall be so, as ruinous heaps. The *stones of the city* are poured down into the valley by the fury of the conqueror, who will thus be revenged on those walls that so long held out against him. They shall be quite pulled down, so that the very foundations shall be discovered, that had been covered by the superstructure; and not one stone shall be left upon another.

4. A charge of sin upon them, as the procuring cause of these desolating judgments, ver. 5. *For the transgression of Jacob is all this*. If it be asked why God is so angry, and why Jacob and Israel are thus brought to ruin by his anger? The answer is ready, sin has done all the mischief, sin hath laid all waste; all the calamities of Jacob and Israel are owing to their transgressions; if they had not gone away from God, he had never appeared thus against them. Note, External privileges and professions will not secure a sinful people from the judgments of God. If sin be found in the house of Israel, if Jacob be guilty of transgression and rebellion, God will not spare them; no, he will punish them first, for their sins are of all other most provoking to him, for they are most reproaching. But it is asked, what is the transgression of Jacob? Note, When we feel the smart of sin it concerns us to enquire what the sin is we smart for, that we may particularly war against that which was against us. And what is it? (1.) It is idolatry, it is the high places, that is the transgression, the great transgression which reigns in Israel, that is spiritual whoredom, the violation of the marriage covenant, which merits a divorce: even the high places of Judah, though not so bad as the transgression of Jacob, yet offensive enough to God, and a remaining blemish upon some of the good reigns; *howbeit the high places were not taken away*. (2.) It is the idolatry of Samaria and Jerusalem, the royal cities of these two kingdoms; those were the most populous places, and where there were most people, there was most wickedness, and they made one another worse; these were the most pompous places, there men lived most in wealth and pleasure, and they forgot God. These were the places that had the greatest influence upon the country by authority and example: so that from them idolatry and profaneness went forth throughout all the land, Jer. xlii. 15. Note, Spiritual disempers are most contagious in persons and places that are most conspicuous. If the head city of a kingdom, or the chief family in a parish be vicious and profane, many will follow their pernicious ways, and write after an ill copy when great ones set it them. The vices of leaders and rulers are leading ruling vices, and therefore shall be surely and sorely punished. These have a great deal to answer for indeed, that not only sin, but make Israel to sin. Those must expect to be made examples, that have been examples of wickedness. If the transgression of Jacob is Samaria, therefore shall Samaria become a heap. Let ring-leaders in sin hear this and fear.

5. The punishment made to answer the sin in the particular destruction of the idols, ver. 7. (1.) The gods they worshipped shall be destroyed; the graven images shall be beaten to pieces by the army of the Assyrians, and all the idols shall be laid desolate. Samaria and her idols were ruined together by Sennacherib. Isa. x. 11 and their gods cast into the fire, for they were no gods, Isa. xxxvii. 19, and this was the Lord's doing. I will lay the idols desolate. Note, If the law of God prevail not to make men in authority destroy idols, God will take the work into his own hands, and will do it himself. (2.) The gifts that passed between them and their gods shall be destroyed, for all the *hires thereof shall be burnt with fire*: which may be meant, either of the presents they made to their idols for the replenishing of their altars, and the adorning of their statues and temples, these shall become a prey to the victorious army, they shall rifle not only private houses but the houses of their gods; or of the corn and wine and oil, which they called the *rewards or hires* which their idolisers, their lovers gave them, Hof. ii. 12. these shall be taken from them by him, whom (by ascribing them to their dear idols) they had defrauded of the honour due to him. Note, That cannot prosper, by which men either are hired to sin or hire others to sin; for the wages of sin will be death. She gathered it of the hire of the harlot, and it shall return to the hire of a harlot. They enriched themselves by their leagues with the idolatrous nations, who gave them advantages to court them into the service of their idols, and their idols temples were enriched with gifts by those that went a whoring after them. And all this wealth shall become a prey to the idolatrous nations, and so be the hire of an harlot again: wages to an army of idolaters, which shall take it as a reward given them by their gods. It shall be a present to king Jareb, Hof. x. 6. What they gave to their idols and what they thought they got by them, shall be as the hire of a harlot, i. e. the curse of God shall be upon it, and it shall never prosper or do them any good. It is common, that what is squeezed out by one lust, is squandered away upon another.

8. Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls. 9. For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem. 10. ¶ Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust. 11. Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel; he shall receive of you his standing. 12. For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem. 13. O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee. 14. Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-gath: the houses of Achzib

shall be a lie to the kings of Israel. 15. Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Moreshah; he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel. 16. Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children: enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

We have here a long train of mourners attending the funeral of a ruined kingdom.

1. The prophet is himself chief mourner, ver. 8, 9. I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked, as a man distracted with grief. The prophets usually expressed their own grief for the public grievances, partly to mollify the predictions of them, and to make it appear it was not out of ill-will they denounced the judgments of God, so far were they from desiring the woe-ful day, that they dreaded it more than any thing: partly to shew how very dreadful and mortal the calamities would be, and to stir up in the people a holy fear of them, that by repentance they might turn away the wrath of God. Note, We ought to lament the punishment of sinners as well as the sufferings of saints in this world; the weeping prophet did so, Jer. ix. 1. so did this prophet, he makes a wailing like the dragons, or rather the jackalls, ravenous beasts, that in those countries used to meet in the night, and howl, and make hideous noises: he mourns as the owls, the screech-owls, or ostriches, as some read it. Two things the prophet here thus dolefully laments, (1.) That Israel's case is desperate, her wound is incurable, it is ruin without remedy; man cannot help her, God will not, because she will not by repentance and reformation help herself. There is indeed balm in Gilead, and a physician there; but they will not apply themselves to the physician, nor apply the balm to themselves, and therefore the wound is incurable. (2.) That Judah likewise is in danger. The cup is going round, and is now put into Judah's hand, the enemy is come to the gate of Jerusalem; soon after the destruction of Samaria, and the ten tribes, the Assyrian army under Sennacherib laid siege to Jerusalem, came to the gate, but could not force their way any farther: however it was with great concern and trouble that the prophet foresaw the sight, so dearly did he love the peace of Jerusalem.

2. Other places are here brought in mourning, and are called upon to mourn: but with this proviso, that they should not let the Philistine hear them, ver. 10. Declare it not in Gath; this is borrowed from David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. i. 20. Tell it not in Gath, for the uncircumcised will triumph in Israel's tears. Note, One would not, if it could be helped, gratify those that make themselves and their companions merry with the sins, or with the sorrows of God's Israel. David was silent and stifled his griefs when the wicked were before him, Psalm xxxix. 1. But though it may be prudent not to give way to a noisy sorrow, yet it is duty to admit a silent one, when the church of God is in distress. Roll thyself in the dust as great mourners used to do, and so let the house of Judah and every house in Jerusalem become a house of Aphrah, a house of dust; covered with dust, crumbled into dust; when God makes the house dust, it becomes us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and to put our mouths in the dust. Thus accommodating ourselves to the providences that are concerning us. Dust we are, God brings us to the dust that we may know it and own it.

Divers other places are here named, that should be sharers in this universal mourning; the names of some of which we do not find elsewhere, whence it is conjectured, that they are names put upon them by the prophet, the signification of which might either indicate or aggravate the miseries coming upon them; thereby to awaken this secure and stupid people to a holy fear of divine wrath. We find Sennacherib's invasion thus described in the prediction of it, by the impressions of terror it should make upon the several cities that fell in his way, Isa. x. 28, 29, &c. Let us observe the particulars here, (1.) The inhabitants of Saphir, which signifies neat and beautiful. (Thou that dwellest fairly, so the margin reads it) shall pass away into captivity, or be forced to flee, stripped of all her ornaments and having thy shame naked. Note, Those who appear never so fine and delicate know not what contempt they may be exposed to; and the more grievous will the shame be to those that have been inhabitants of Saphir. (2.) The inhabitants of Zaanan, which signifies the country of flocks, a populous country, where the people are as numerous and thick as flocks of sheep, shall yet be so taken up with their own calamities, felt or feared, that they shall not come forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel, which signifies a place near, shall not condole with or bring any succour to their next neighbours in distress; for he shall receive of you his standing; the enemy shall encamp among you, O inhabitants of Zaanan, shall take up a station there, shall find footing among you. They may well think themselves excused from helping their neighbours, that find they have enough to do to help themselves and to hold their own. (3.) As for the inhabitants of Maroth, which some think is put for Ramoth; others, that it signifies the rough places, they waited carefully for good, and were grieved for the want of it, but were disappointed: for evil came from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem, when the Assyrian army besieged it, ver. 12. The inhabitants of Maroth might well overlook their own particular grievances, when they saw the holy city itself in danger; and might well overlook the Assyrian that was the instrument, when they saw the evil coming from the Lord. (4.) Lachish was a city of Judah, which Sennacherib laid siege to, Isa. xxxvi. 1, 2. The inhabitants of that city are called to bind the chariot to the swift beast, to prepare for a speedy flight, as having no other way left to secure themselves and their families; or, it is spoken ironically, you have had your chariots and swift beasts, but where are they now? God's quarrel with Lachish is, that she is the beginning of the sin, probably the sin of idolatry, to the daughter of Zion, ver. 13. they had learned it from the ten tribes their near neighbours, and so infected the two tribes with it. Note, Those that help to bring sin into a country, do but thereby prepare for the throwing of themselves out of it. They must expect to be first in the punishment, that have been ring-leaders in sin. The transgressions of Israel were found in thee, i. e. when they came to be traced up to their original, they were found to take rise much from that city. God knows at whose door to lay the blame of the transgressions of Israel, and whom to find guilty. Lachish having been so much accessory to the sin of Israel, shall certainly be reckoned with, thou shalt give presents to Moresheth-gath a city of the Philistines, which perhaps had a dependance upon Gath, that famous Philistine city; thou shalt send to court those of that city to assist thee, but it shall be in vain, for, ver. 14. the houses of Achzib (a city which joined to Moreshah or Moresheth, and is mentioned with it, Josh. xv. 44.) shall be a lie to the kings of Israel, though they depend upon their strength, yet they shall fail them; here there is an allusion to the name, achzib, signifies a lie, and so it shall prove to those that trust in it. (5.) Moreshah, that could not or would not help Israel, shall herself be made a prey, ver. 15. I will bring an heir, i. e. an enemy, that shall take possession of thy lands, with as much assurance as if he were heir at law to them, and he shall come to Adullam, and to the glory of Israel, i. e. to Jerusalem the head city; or the glory of Israel shall come to



to be as Adullam a poor despicable place : or the king of Assyria, whom Israel had gloried in, shall come to Adullam in laying the country waste. 6.) The whole land of Judah seems to be spoken to, *ver. 16.* and called to weeping and mourning ; *make thee bald*, by tearing thy hair and shaving thy head, *poll thee for thy delicate children*, that had been tenderly and nicely brought up, *enlarge thy baldness as the eagle* when she casts her feathers, and is all over bald, *for they are gone into captivity from thee*, and are not likely to return ; and their captivity will be the more grievous to them, because they have been brought up delicately, and have not been inured to hardship. Or, this is directed particularly to the inhabitants of *Mareslah*, as *ver. 15.* That was the prophet's own city, and yet he denounceth the judgments of God against it ; for it shall be an aggravation of its sin, that it had such a prophet, and knew not the day of its visitation. Its being thus privileged, since it improved not the privilege, shall not procure favour for it either with God or his prophet.

## C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The sins with which the people of Israel are charged, covetousness and oppression, fraudulent and violent practices, *ver. 1, 2.* dealing barbarously, even with women and children and other harmless people, *ver. 8, 9.* Opposition of God's prophets and silencing them, *ver. 6, 7,* and delighting in false prophets, *ver. 11.* (2.) The judgments with which they are threatened for those sins, that they should be humbled and impoverished, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* and banished, *ver. 10.* (3.) Gracious promises of comfort, reserved for the good people among them, in the Messiah, *ver. 12, 13.* And this is the sum and scope of most of the chapters of this and of other prophecies.

1. **W**OE to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds : when the morning is light they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. 2. And they covet fields, and take them by violence : and houses, and take them away : and so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. 3. Therefore thus saith the LORD ; Behold against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks ; neither shall ye go haughtily : for this time is evil. 4. ¶ In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled : he hath changed the portion of my people : how hath he removed it from me ! turning away he hath divided our fields. 5. Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by the lot in the congregation of the LORD.

Here is, 1. The injustice of man contriving the evil of sin, *ver. 1, 2.* God was coming forth against this people to destroy them, and here he shews what was the ground of his controversy with them, it is that which is often mentioned as a sin that hastens the ruin of nations and families, as much as any other, the sin of oppression. Let us see the steps of it, (1.) They eagerly desire that which is not their own, that is the root of bitterness ; the root of all evil, *Ver. 2.* They covet fields and houses, as Ahab did Naboth's vineyard. O that such a one's field and house were mine ! It lies convenient for me, and I would manage it better than he doth ; it is fitter for me than for him. (2.) They let their wits at work, to invent ways of accomplishing their desire, *ver. 1.* they devise iniquity with a great deal of cursed art and policy, they plot how to do it effectually, and yet so as not to expose themselves, or bring themselves into danger, or under reproach by it. This is called *working evil* ; they are working it in their heads, in their families, and are as intent upon it, and with as much pleasure, as if they were doing it ; and are as confident of their success (so wisely do they think they have laid the scheme) as if it were assuredly done. Note, It is bad to do mischief upon a sudden thought, but much worse to devise it, to do it with design and deliberation ; when the craft and subtilty of the whole serpent appears with his poison and venom, it is wickedness in perfection. They devised it upon their beds, when they should have been asleep ; care to compass a mischievous design held their eyes waking ; upon their beds, where they should have been remembering God and meditating upon him ; where they should have been communing with their own hearts and examining them, they were devising iniquity. It is of great consequence to us, how we improve and employ the hearts of our retirement and solitude. (3.) They employ their power in executing what they have designed and contrived ; they practise the iniquity they have devised, because it is in the power of their hand, they find they can compass it by the help of their wealth and the authority and interest they have, and that none dare controul them or call them to an account for it ; and thus they think will justify them and bear them out in it. Note, It is the mistake of many, to think as they can do they may do ; whereas no power is given for destruction, but all for edification. (4.) They are industrious and very expeditious in accomplishing the iniquity they have devised ; when they have settled the matter in their thoughts in their beds, they lose no time, but as soon as the morning is light they practise it ; are early up in the prosecution of their designs, and what ill their hand finds to do they do it with all their might ; which shames our slothfulness and dilatoriness in doing good, and should shame us out of it. In the service of God and our generation, let it never be said, we left that to be done to-morrow which we could do to-day. (5.) They stick at nothing to compass their designs ; what they covet they take away if they can, and, (1.) They care not what wrong they do, though it be never so gross and open ; they take away men's fields by violence ; not only by fraud, and underhand practices, and colour of law, but by force, and with a high hand. (2.) They care not whom they do wrong to, nor how far the iniquity extends which they devise ; they oppress a man and his house, they rob and ruin those that have numerous families to maintain, and are not concerned, though they send them and their wives and children a begging. They oppress a man and his heritage ; they take away from men, that which they have an unquestionable title to, having received it from their ancestors, and which they have but in trust, to transmit it to their posterity ; but those oppressors care not how many they impoverish, so they may but enrich themselves. Note, If covetousness reigns in the heart, commonly all compassion is banished from it ; and if any man love this world, as the love of the Father, so the love of his neighbour is not in him.

2. The justice of God contriving the evil of punishment for this sin, *ver. 3.* Therefore thus saith the Lord, the righteous God, that judgeth between man and man, and is an avenger on them that do wrong. Behold against this

family do I devise an evil, i. e. against the whole kingdom, the house of Israel, and particularly those families in it that were cruel and oppressive : They unjustly devise evil against their brethren, and God will justly devise evil against them. Infinite wisdom will so contrive the punishment of their sin, as that it shall be very just, and such as cannot be avoided, very severe, and such as they cannot bear, and very signal and remarkable, and such as shall be universally observed to answer the sin. The more there appears of a wicked wit in the sin, the more there shall appear of a holy wisdom and conduct in the punishment ; for the Lord will be known by the judgments he executeth, he will be owned by them. (1.) He finds them very secure and confident, and they shall some way or other escape the judgment, or though they fall under it shall soon throw it off and get clear of it, and therefore he tells them, it is an evil from which they shall not remove their neck. They were children of Belial, that would not endure the easy yoke of God's righteous commands, but broke those bonds of sin, and cast away those cords from them ; and therefore God will lay upon them the heavy yoke of his righteous judgments, and they shall be compelled to withdraw their necks from that ; those that will not be overcome shall be overcome. (2.) He finds them very proud and haughty, and therefore he tells them they shall not go haughtily with stretched forth necks and swollen eyes, walking and mincing as they go. Isa. x. 16. for this time is evil, and the events of it were very humbling and mortifying, and such as will bring down the stoutest spirit. (3.) He found them very merry and jovial, and therefore tells them their note shall be changed, their laughter shall be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness, *ver. 4.* In that day, when God comes to punish you for your oppression, that one takes up a parable against you, and laments with a doleful lamentation, with a lamentation of lamentations. In the word is, a most lamentable lamentation ; as a song of songs is a most pleasing song. Their enemies shall insult over them and make a jest of their griefs, for they shall take up a parable against them. Their friends shall mourn over them, and lay to heart their calamities, and this shall be the general cry, We be utterly spoiled, we are all undone. Note, They that were most haughty and secure in their prosperity, are commonly most dejected, and most ready to despair in their adversity. (1.) He found them very rich in houses and lands which they had gained by oppression, and therefore tells them they shall be stripped of all. (1.) They should in their despair give it all up, they shall say, We be utterly spoiled ; he hath changed the portion of my people ; so that it is now no longer theirs, but it is in the possession and occupation of their enemies. How hath he removed it from me ! How suddenly, how powerfully : What is unjustly got by us, will not long continue with us, the Lord God will remove it. Turning away from us in wrath, he hath divided our fields, and given them into the hands of strangers. Woe to those from whom God turns away. The margin reads it, Instead of restoring he hath divided our fields ; instead of putting us again in the possession of our estates, he hath conveyed those in the possession of them that have taken them from us. Note, It is just with God, that those who have dealt fraudulently and violently with others, should themselves be dealt fraudulently and violently with. (2.) God shall ratify what they say, in their despair, *ver. 5.* God will say, They have none to cast a cord by lot, in the congregation of the Lord, none to divide inheritances, because there shall be no inheritances to divide, no courts to try titles to lands, or determine controversies about them ; or evil lots upon them as in Joshua's time, for all shall be in the enemy's hand. This land which should be taken from them, they had not only an unquestionable title to, but a very comfortable enjoyment of, for it was in the congregation of the Lord or rather the congregation of the Lord was in it ; it was God's land, it was a holy land, and therefore it was the more grievous to them to be turned out of it. Note, Those are to be the worst calamities, which cut us off from the congregation of the Lord, or cut us short in the enjoyment of the privileges of it.

6. Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophecy : they shall not prophecy to them, that they shall not take shame. 7. ¶ O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened ? are these his doings ? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly ? 8. Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy : ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war. 9. The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses : from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever. 10. Arise ye, and depart ; for this is not your rest : because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction. 11. If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophecy unto thee of wine and of strong drink ; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

Here are two sins charged upon the people of Israel, and judgments denounced against them for each, such judgments as exactly answer the sin ; persecuting God's prophets, and oppressing God's poor.

1. Persecuting God's prophets ; suppressing and silencing them, is a sin that provokes God as much as any other, for it not only spits in the face of his authority over us, but spurns at the bowels of his mercy to us ; for his sending prophets to us, is a sure and valuable token of his good-will. Now observe here,

(1.) What the obstruction and opposition was which this people gave to God's prophets. They said to them that prophecy, prophecy ye not, as Isa. xxx. 10. They said to the seers, see not ; do not trouble us with accounts of what you have seen, nor bring us any such frightful messages ; either they must not prophecy at all, or only what they please. The word for *prophecy*, here signifies *dropping*, for the words of the prophets dropped from heaven as the dew. Note, Those that hate to be reformed hate to be improved, and do all they can to silence faithful ministers. Amos was forbidden to prophecy, Amos vii. 10, &c. And therefore persecutors stop their breath, because they have no other way to stop their mouths, for if they live they will preach, and torment them that dwell on the earth, as the two witnesses did, Rev. xi. 10. Some read it, Prophecy not, let these prophecy ; let not those prophecy that tell us of our faults, and threaten us, but let these prophecy that will flatter us in our sins, and cry peace to us. They will not say they will have no ministers at all, but they will have such as would say just what they would have them, and go their way. This they are charged with, *ver. 11.* that when they silenced and frowned upon the true prophets, they countenanced and encouraged pretenders, and set them up, and made an interest for them, to confront God's faithful prophets. If a man walk in the spirit of falsehood, pretend to have the spirit of God, but really it is a spirit of error, a spirit of delusion, and he himself knows it that he has no commission, no instruction from God, yet if he saith, I will



prophecy unto thee of wine and strong drink, if he will but assure them, that they shall have wine and strong drink enough, that they need not fear the judgments of war and famine, which the other prophets threatened them with, that they should always have plenty of the delights of sense, and never know the want of them: And if he will but tell them, that it is lawful for them to drink as much as they please of their wine and strong drink, and they need not scruple being drunk; that they shall have peace, though they go on and add drunkenness to thirst, such a prophet as this is a man after their own heart, that will tell them, there is neither sin nor danger in that wicked course of life they lead, *He shall even be the prophet of this people*, i. e. Such a man they would have to be their prophet, that will not only associate himself with them in their rioting and revellings, but will pretend to consecrate it by his prophecies, and so harden them in their security and sensuality. Note, It is not strange if people that are vicious and debauched, covet to have ministers that are altogether such as themselves, for they are willing to believe God is so too. *Psal. l. 21.* But how are sacred things profaned, when they are prostituted to such base purposes! When prophecy itself shall be pressed into the services of a lewd and profane crew! But thus that servant who said, *My Lord delays his coming* by the spirit of falshood, *snote his fellow-servants, and eat and drank with the drunken.* (2.) How they are here expostulated, with upon this matter, *ver. 7. O thou that art named the house of Jacob*, doth it become thee to say and do thus? Wilt thou silence them that prophecy, and forbid them to speak in God's name? Note, It is an honour and privilege to be named of the house of Jacob, thou art called a Jew, *Rom. ii. 17.* But when those who are called by that worthy name degenerate, they commonly prove the worst of men themselves, and the worst enemies to God's prophets. The Jews that were named of the house of Jacob, were the most violent persecutors of the first preachers of the gospel. Upon this the prophet here argues with these opposers of the word of God, and shews them, (1.) What an affront they hereby put upon God, the God of the holy prophets; *Is the Lord's Spirit straightened?* In silencing the Lord's prophets, you do what you can to silence his spirit too, but do you think you can do it? Can you make the Spirit of God your prisoner and your servant? Will you prescribe to him what he shall say, and forbid him to say what is displeasing to you? If you silence the prophets, yet cannot the spirit of the Lord find out other ways to reach your consciences? Can your unbelief frustrate the divine counsels? (2.) What a scandal it was to their profession as Jews, you are named the house of Jacob, and it is your honour, but are these his doings? Are these the doings of your father Jacob? Do you herein tread in his steps? No, if you were indeed his children, you would do his works; but now ye seek to kill and silence a man that tells you the truth in God's name. *This did not Abraham*, *John viii. 39, 40.* This did not Jacob. Or, *Are these God's doings?* Are these doings that will please him; are these the doings of his people? No, you know they are not, however some may be so strangely blinded and bigotted as to kill God's ministers, and think that therein they do him service, *John xvi. 2.* (3.) Let them consider how unreasonable and absurd the thing was in itself; *do not my words do good to them that walk uprightly?* Yes, certainly they do; it is an appeal to the experiences of the generation of the upright; call now if there be any of them that will answer you, and to which of the saints will you turn? Turn to which you will, and you will find they all agree in this, that the word of God doth good to them that walk uprightly; and will you then oppose that which doth good, so much good as good preaching doth? herein you wrong God, who owns the words of the prophets to be his words, they are my words; and who by them aims and designs to do good to mankind, (*Psal. cxix. 68.*) And will you hinder the great benefactor from doing good, will you put the light of the world under a bushel? You had as good say to the sun, shine not, as say to the Jews, see not. Herein you wrong the souls of men, and deprive them of the benefit designed them by the word of God. Note, Those are enemies not only to God but to the world, they are enemies to their country, that silence good ministers, and obstruct the means of knowledge and grace; for it is certainly for the public common good of states and kingdoms, that religion should be encouraged. God's words do good to them that walk uprightly; it is the character of good people, that they walk uprightly, *Psal. xv. 2.* And it is their comfort that the words of God are good, and do good to them; they find comfort in them, God's words are good words to good people, and speak comfortably to them. But they that opposed the words of God, and prohibited the prophets, pleaded in justification of themselves, that God's words were unprofitable and unpleasant to them, and did them no good, nor prophesied any good concerning them, but evil, as Ahab complained of Micah: in answer to which the prophet here tells them, that it was their own fault; they might thank themselves; they might find it of good use to them, if they were but disposed to make a good use of it; if they would but walk uprightly as they should, and so qualify themselves for comfort, the word of God would speak comfortably to them. *Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.*

3. What they are threatened with for this sin; God also will choose their delusions, and, (1.) They shall be deprived of the benefit of a faithful ministry. Since they say, Prophecy not, God will take them at their word, and they shall not prophecy to them, their sin shall be their punishment if men will silence God's ministers, it is just with God to silence them, as he did Ezekiel, and to say, they shall no more be reprovers and monitors to them. Let the physician no longer attend the patient that will not be healed for he will not be ruled. They shall not prophecy to them, and then they will not take shame. As it is the work of magistrates, so also of ministers to put men to shame when they do amiss, *Judges xviii. 7.* that being made ashamed of their folly, they may not return again to it; but when God gives men up to be impudent and shameless in sin, he saith to his prophets, *They are joined to idols, let them alone.* (2.) They shall be given up to the blind conduct of an unfaithful ministry. We may understand *ver. 11.* as a threatening; *If a man be found walking in the spirit of falshood*, having such a lying spirit, as was in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, that will strengthen their hands in their wicked ways, he shall be the prophet of the people, i. e. God will leave them to themselves to hearken to such; since they will be deceived, let them be deceived; since they will not admit the truth in the love of it, God will send them strong delusions to believe a lie, *2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.* they shall have prophets that will prophecy to them for wine and strong drink, so some read it, that will give you a cast of their office to your mind, for a bottle of wine, or a flagon of ale, will sooth sinners up in their sins, if they will but feed them with the gratifications of their lusts; to have such prophets, and to be ridden by them, is as sad a judgment, as any people can be under, and as ill a preface of ruin approaching, as it is to a particular person to be under the influence of a debauching conscience.

2. Oppressing God's poor is another sin they are charged with, as before, *ver. 1, 2.* for it is a sin doubly hateful and provoking to God. Observe, 1. How the sin is described, *ver. 8, 9.* when they contemned God's prophets and opposed them, they broke out into all other wickedness, what bonds will hold those that have no reverence to God's word? They

who formerly rose up against the enemies of the nation, in defence of their country, and therein behaved themselves bravely, now of late rose up as enemies of the nation, and instead of defending it destroyed it, and did it more mischief (as usually such vipers in the bowels of a state do) than a foreign enemy could do. They made a prey of men, women and children. (1.) Of men, that were travelling on the way, that pass by securely, as men averse from war, that were far from any ill designs, but went peaceably about their lawful occasions, those they set upon, as if they had been dangerous obnoxious people, and pulled off the robe with the garment from them, i. e. they stripped them both of the upper and inner garment, took away their cloak and would have their coat also; thus barbarously did they use those that were quiet in the land: being harmless they were fearless, and so the more easily made a prey of. (2.) Of women, whose sex should have been their protection, *ver. 9.* The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; they devour widows houses, *Matt. xxiii. 14.* and so turn them out of the possession of them, because they were pleasant houses, and such as they had a mind for. It was inhuman to deal thus barbarously with women, but that which especially aggravated it was, that they were the women for God's people, whom they knew to be under his protection. (3.) Of children, whose age entitles them to a tender usage, from their children have you taken away my glory for ever; it was the glory of the Israelites' children that they were free, but they enslaved them; that they were born in God's house, and had a right to the privileges of it, but they sold them to strangers, sent them into idolatrous countries, where they were deprived for ever of that glory, at least the oppressors designed their captivity should be perpetual. Note, The righteous God will certainly reckon for injuries done to the widows and fatherless, who being helpless and friendless cannot otherwise expect to be righted.

2. What the sentence is that is passed upon them for it, *ver. 11.* Arise ye and depart, prepare to quit this land, for you shall be forced out of it, as you have forced the women and children of my people out of their possessions; it is not, it shall not be your rest, as it was intended Canaan should be, *Psal. xcv. 11.* You shall neither have contentment nor continuance in it, because it is polluted by your wickedness. Sin is defiling to a land, and sinners cannot expect to rest in a land which they have polluted, but it will spue them out, as this land spued out the Canaanites of old, when they had polluted it with their abominations, *Lev. xviii. 27, 28.* Nay, you shall not only be obliged to depart out of this land, but it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction; you shall either be turned out of it, or (which is all one) you shall be ruined in it. We may apply this to our state in this present world; it is polluted, there is a great deal of corruption in the world through lust, and therefore we should arise and depart out of it, keep at a distance from the corruption that is in it, and keep ourselves unspotted from it; it is not our rest, it was never intended to be so, it was designed for our passage but not for our portion, our inn but not our home; here we have no continuing city: let us therefore arise and depart, let us sit loose to it and live above it, and think of leaving it, and seek a continuing city above.

12. ¶ I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel, I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. 13. The breaker is come up before them, they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it, and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

After threatenings of wrath the chapter here concludes, as is usual in the prophets, with promises of mercy, which were in part fulfilled when the Jews returned out of Babylon, and had their full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah. Their grievances shall be all redressed.

1. Whereas they were dispersed, they shall be brought together again, and shall jointly receive the tokens of God's favour to them, and shall have communion with each other and comfort in each other, *ver. 12.* I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of Jacob, all that belong to thee, all that are named of the house of Jacob, *ver. 7.* that are now expelled your country, *ver. 10.* I will bring you together again, and not one of you shall be lost, not one of you shall be missing. I will surely gather the remnant of Israel, that remnant that is designed and reserved for salvation, they shall be brought to incorporate in one body. I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah. Sheep are inoffensive and sociable creatures, they shall be as the flock in the midst of their fold, their own fold, where they are safe under the shepherd's eye and care; and they shall make great noise, as numerous flocks and herds do, with their bleating and lowing, by reason of the multitude of men (for the sheep are men, as the prophet explains this comparison, *Ezek. xxxiv. 31.*) not by reason of their strifes and contentions, but by reason of their great numbers. This was accomplished, when Christ, by his gospel, gathered together in one, all the children of God that were scattered abroad, and united both Jews and Gentiles in one fold, and under one shepherd; when all the complaint was, that the place was too straight for them, that was the noise by reason of their multitude, *Isa. xlix. 19, 20.* When there were some added to the church from all parts of the world, and all men were drawn to Christ by the attractive power of his cross; which shall be done yet more and more, and perfectly done, when he shall send forth his angels to gather in his elect from the four winds.

2. Whereas God had seemed to desert them, and cast them off, now he will own them, and head them, and help them through all the difficulties that are in the way of their return and deliverance, *ver. 13.* The breaker is come up before them, to break down all opposition and clear the road for them; and under his conduct they have broken up and have passed through the gate, the door of escape out of their captivity, and are gone out by it with courage and resolution, having omnipotence for their vanguard; their king shall pass before them, to lead them the way, even Jehovah, (he is their king) on the head of them, as he was on the head of the armies of Israel, when they followed the pillar of cloud and fire, through the wilderness; and when he appeared to Joshua, as captain of the Lord's host. Christ is the church's King; he is Jehovah, he heads them; passeth before them; brings them out of the land of their captivity; brings them into the land of their rest. He is the breaker, that broke in upon the powers of darkness, and broke through them; that rent the veil; and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The learned bishop Pearson applies it to the resurrection of Christ, by which he obtained the power and became the pattern of our resurrection. The breaker is gone up before us out of the grave and has carried away its gates, as Samson did Gaza's, bar and all, and by that breach we go out. The learned Dr. Pocock mentions it as the sense which some of the ancient Jews give of it, that the breaker is Elias, and their king the Messiah, the son of David; and he thinks we may apply it to Christ and his forerunner John the baptist; John was the breaker, he broke the ice, prepared the way of



of the Lord by the baptism of repentance; in him the gospel began, from his time the kingdom of heaven suffered violence; and so the Christian church is introduced, with Messiah the prince before it, on the head of it, going forth conquering and to conquer.

## CHAP. III.

What the apostle saith of another of the prophets, is true of this who was also his cotemporary. Elisha is very bold, Rom. x. 20. so in this chapter, Micah is very bold, in reproving and threatening the great men that were the ring-leaders in sin; and he gives the reason, ver. 8. why he was so bold, because he had commission and instruction from God to say what he said, and was carried out in it by a higher spirit and power than his own. Magistracy and ministry are two great ordinances of God for good to his church, but these were both corrupted and the intentions of them perverted; and upon those that abused them, and so abused the church with them, the prophet is very severe, and justly so. (1.) He gives them their lesson severally, reproving and threatening oppressing princes, ver. 1—4. and false and flattering prophets, ver. 5—7. (2.) He gives them their lesson jointly, putting them together, as acting in conjunction for the ruin of the kingdom, which they should see the ruins of, ver. 9—12.

1. **AND** I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment? 2. Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones: 3. Who also eat the flesh of my people, and slay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. 4. Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. 5. ¶ Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace: and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him: 6. Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. 7. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips: for there is no answer of God.

Princes and prophets, when they faithfully discharge the duty of their office, are to be highly honoured above other men, but when they betray their trust and act contrary to it, they should hear of their faults as well as others, and shall be made to know there is a God above them, to whom they are accountable; at his bar the prophet here in his name arraigns them.

1. Let the princes hear their charge and their doom. The heads of Jacob, and the princes of the house of Israel, are called upon to hear what the prophet has to say to them, ver. 1. The word of God has reproofs for the greatest of men, which the ministers ought to apply as there is occasion. The prophet here has comfort in the reflection upon it, that whatever the success was, he had faithfully discharged his trust, *And I said, Hear O princes.* He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had not balked his duty for fear of the face of men. He tells them, (1.) What was expected from them. *Is it not for you to know judgment?* i. e. to do judgment, for otherwise the knowledge of it is of no avail. Is it not your business to administer justice impartially, and not to know faces (as the Hebrew phrase is, for partiality and respect of persons) but to know judgment, and the merits of every cause? Or, it may be taken for granted, that the heads and rulers are well acquainted with the rules of justice, whatever others are; for they have those means of knowledge, and have not those excuses for ignorance which some others have that are poor and foolish, Jer. v. 4. and if so, their transgression of the laws of justice is the more provoking to God, for they sin against knowledge. Is it not for you to know judgment? Yes, it is; therefore stand still and hear your own judgment, and judge if it be not right, whether any thing can be objected against it. (2.) How wretchedly they had transgressed the rules of judgment though they knew what they were. Their principle and disposition is bad, they hate the good, and love the evil; they hate good in others, and hate it should have any influence on themselves; they hate to do good, hate to have any good done, and hate those that are good, and do good, and they love the evil, delight in mischief, and in those that do mischief. This being their principle, their practice was accordingly: they are very cruel and severe towards those that are under their power; and whoever lies at their mercy, will find that they have none. They barbarously devour those whom they should protect: and, as unfaithful shepherds, *steal* the flock they should feed; nay, instead of feeding it, they feed upon it, Ezek. xxxiv. 2. It is fit indeed, that he who feedeth a flock, should eat of the milk of the flock, 1 Cor. ix. 7. but that will not content them, they eat the flesh of my people; it is fit they should be clothed with the wool, but that will not serve, they slay the skin from off them, ver. 3. by imposing heavier taxes upon them than they could bear, and exacting them with rigour, by mulcts and fines, and corporal punishments, for pretended crimes, they ruined the estates and families of their subjects, took away from some their lives, from others their livelihoods, and were to their subjects as beasts of prey, rather than shepherds: They break their bones to come to the marrow, and chop the flesh in pieces as for the pot. This speaks them, (1.) Very ravenous and greedy for themselves, indulging themselves in luxury and sensuality. (2.) Very barbarous and cruel to those that were under them, not caring whom they beggared, so they could but enrich themselves; such evil is the love of money the root of. (3.) How they might expect that God should deal with them who had been thus cruel to his subjects: the rule is fixed, they shall have judgment without mercy that have shewed no mercy, ver. 4. They shall cry to the Lord, but he will not hear them, in the day of their distress, as the poor cried to them in the day of their prosperity, and they would not hear them. There will come a time, when the most proud and scornful sinners will cry to the Lord, and sue for that mercy, which when time was, they neither valued nor copied out; but it will then be in vain, God will even hide his face from them at that time, that time when they need his

favour and see themselves undone without it. At another time they would have turned their back upon him, but at that time he will turn his back upon them, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. Note, Men cannot expect to do ill, and fare well, but may expect to find, as Adoni-bezek did, that done to them which they did to others, for he is righteous who taketh vengeance; with the froward God will shew himself froward; and often gives up cruel unmerciful men, into the hands of those who are cruel and unmerciful to them, as themselves have formerly been to others. This agrees with Prov. xxi. 13. Who stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself and shall not be heard; but the merciful have reason to hope that they shall obtain mercy.

2. Let the prophets hear their charge too, and their doom; they were such as prophesied falsely, and the princes bare rule by their means. Observe,

1. What was their sin. (1.) They made it all their business to flatter and deceive the people; they make my people err; led them into mistakes, both concerning what they shall do, and concerning what God would do with them; it is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and those draw them out of the way, that should guide them and go before them in it. They make them to err by crying peace, by telling them that they do well, and that all shall be well with them; whereas they are in the paths of sin, and within a step of ruin. They cry peace, but they bite with their teeth; which perhaps is meant of their biting their own lips, as we used to do, when we would suppress something which we are ready to speak; when they cried peace their own hearts gave them the lie, and they were just ready to eat their own words, and to contradict themselves, but they bit with their teeth and kept it in: They were not blind leaders of the blind, for they saw the ditch before them, and yet led their followers into it. (2.) They made it all their aim to glut themselves and serve their own belly, as the seducers in St. Paul's time, Rom. xvi. 18. for their God is their belly, Phil. iii. 19. They bite with their teeth and cry peace, i. e. they will flatter and compliment those that will feed them with good bits, will give them something to eat; but as for those that put not into their mouths, that are not continually cramming them, they look upon them as their enemies, to them they do not cry peace, as they do to those whom they look upon as their benefactors, but they even prepare war against them: against them they denounce the judgments of God: they preach either comfort or terror to men not according as they are to God, but as they are to them; as the crafty priests of the church of Rome, in some places, make their image either to smile or frown upon the offerer according as his offering is. Justly is it insisted on as a necessary qualification of a minister, 1 Tim. iii. 3. and again, Tit. i. 7. that he be not greedy of filthy lucre.

2. What is the sentence passed upon them for this sin, ver. 6, 7. It is threatened, (1.) That they shall be involved in troubles and miseries with those to whom they had cried peace. Night shall be upon them. a dark cold night of calamity; such as they flattered people with hope should never come. It shall be dark unto you, darker to you than others; the sun shall go down over the prophets. shall go down at noon; all comfort shall depart from them, and they shall be deprived of all hope of it: The day shall be dark over them, in which they promised themselves light. Nor shall they only be surrounded with outward troubles, but their minds shall be full of confusion, and they shall be brought to their wits end; their heads shall be muddled and clouded, and their own thoughts shall trouble them; and that is trouble enough: They kept others in the dark, and now God will bring them into the dark. (2.) That thereby they shall be silenced, and all their pretensions to prophecy for ever flamed. They never had any true vision, and now the event disproving their predictions of peace, it shall be made to appear that they never had any; that there never was an answer of God to them, but it was all a sham, and they were cheats and impostors. Their reputation being thus quite sunk, their confidence would of course fail them. And their spirits being ruffled and confused, their invention would fail them too: and by reason of this darkness, both without and within too, they shall not divine, they shall not have so much as a counterfeit vision to produce, they shall be ashamed and confounded, and cover their lips, as men that are quite baffled and have nothing to say for themselves. Note, Those who deceive others, are but preparing confusion for their own faces.

8. ¶ But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. 9. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. 10. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. 11. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us. 12. Therefore shall Zion for your fake be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Here, 1. The prophet experienceth a divine power going along with him in his work, and he makes a solemn profession and protestation of it, as that which would justify him and bear him out in his plain dealing with the princes and rulers; He would not, he durst not make thus bold with the great men, but that he was carried out to do it by a prophetic impulse and impression: It was not he that said it, but God by him, and he could not but speak the word that God put into his mouth. It comes in likewise by way of opposition to the false prophets who were full of shame, when they lived to see themselves proved liars, and who never had courage to deal faithfully with the people, but flattered them in their sins; they were sensual not having the Spirit, but truly (saith Micah) I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, ver. 8. Having in himself an assurance of the truth of what he said, he said it with assurance. Compare him with those false prophets, and you will say, there is no comparison between them, what is the chaff to the wheat? Jer. xxiii. 28. What is painted fire to real fire? Observe here, (1.) What the qualifications were with which this prophet was endued; he was full of power, and of judgment and of might: he had an ardent love to God and to the souls of men, a deep concern for his glory and their salvation, and a flaming zeal against sin. He had likewise courage to reprove it and witness against it, not fearing the wrath either of great men or of great multitudes: whatever difficulties or discouragements he met with, they did not deter him or drive him from his work, none of these things moved him; and all this was guided by judgment and discretion, he



he was a man of conduct as well as courage ; in all his preaching there was *light* as well as *heat*, and a spirit of wisdom as well as zeal : thus was this man of God *thoroughly furnished* for every good word he had to say, and every good work he had to do. And those he preached to could not but perceive him full both of *power* and *judgment*, for they found both their *understandings opened*, and their *hearts made to burn within them*, with such evidence and demonstration and such power did the word come from him. (2.) Whence he had these qualifications ; not from and of himself, but he was *full of power by the spirit of the Lord*. Knowing that it was indeed the *Spirit of the Lord* that was in him and spoke by him, that it was a divine revelation that he delivered, he spoke it boldly, and as one having authority, *set his face as a flint*, knowing he should be justified and borne out in what he said, *Isa. l. 7, 8*. Note, Those that act honestly may act boldly ; and those that are sure they have a commission from God, need not be afraid of opposition from men. Nay, he had not only a spirit of prophecy, which was the ground of his boldness, but the Spirit of sanctification endued him with that boldness and wisdom which was requisite for him. It was not in any strength of his own that he was strong, for *who is sufficient for these things ? But in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, for from him all our *sufficiency* is. Are we *full of power* at any time for that which is good ? it is purely by the *Spirit of the Lord*, for of ourselves we are weak as water ; it is the God of Israel that gives *strength and power*, both to his people and to his ministers. (3.) What use he made of these qualifications, this judgment and this power : he declared to Jacob his *transgression*, and to Israel his *sin*. If transgression be found in Jacob and Israel, they must be told of it, and it is the business of God's prophets to tell them of it ; to *cry aloud*, and *not to spare*, *Isa. lviii. 1*. Those that come to hear the word of God, must be willing to be told of their faults, and must not only give their ministers leave to deal plainly and faithfully with them, but take it kindly and be thankful ; but because few have meekness enough to receive reproof, those have need of a great deal of boldness that are to give reproofs, and must pray for a Spirit both of wisdom and might.

2. The prophet exerts this power in dealing with the *heads of the house of Jacob*, both the *princes* and the *prophets*, whom he had drawn up a high charge against in the former part of the chapter. He repeats the summons of their attendance and attention, *ver. 9*. the same that we had, *ver. 1*. directing himself to the *princes of the house of Israel*, yet he means those of Judah : for it appears *Jer. xxvi. 18, 19*. (where *ver. 12* is quoted) that this was spoken in Hezekiah's kingdom ; but the ten tribes being gone into captivity, Judah is all that is now left of Jacob and Israel. The prophet speaks respectfully to them, *Hear, I pray you*, and gives them their titles of *heads* and *princes* : Ministers must be faithful to great men in reproving them for their sins, but they must not be rude and uncivil to them. Now observe here,

1. The great wickedness that these heads of the house of Jacob were guilty of, *princes, priests, and prophets* ; in short, they were covetous, and prostituted their offices to their love of money. (1.) *The princes abhorred all judgment*, they would not be governed by any of its laws, either in their own practice or in passing sentence upon appeals made to them : They *perverted all equity*, and scorned to be under the direction or correction of justice, when it could not be made pliable to their secular interests. When under pretence of doing right they did the most palpable wrongs, then they *perverted equity* and made it serve a purpose contrary to the intention of the founder of magistracy and fountain of power. It is laid to their charge, *ver. 10*. that they *build up Zion with blood*. They pretend in justification of their extortion and oppressions, that they *built up Zion* and Jerusalem, they add new streets and squares to the holy cities, and adorn them ; they establish and advance the public interests both in church and state, and think therein they do God and Israel good service. But it is *with blood* and *with iniquity*, and therefore it cannot prosper ; nor will their intentions of good to the city of God justify their contradictions to the law of God. They mistake, that think a burning flaming zeal for holy church, and the propagating of the faith, will serve to consecrate robberies and murders, massacres and depredations ; no, Zion's walls owe those no thanks that build them up with blood and iniquity. The sin of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The office of the princes is to judge upon appeals made to them, but they judge for reward, *ver. 11*. they give judgment on their side that give the bribe ; the most righteous cause shall not be carried without a fee, and for a fee the most unrighteous cause shall be carried. Miserable is the people's case, when the judge's enquiry upon a cause is not what is to be done in it, but what is to be got by it ? (2.) The priest's work was to teach the people, and for that the law had provided them a very honourable, comfortable maintenance ; but that will not content them, they *teach for hire* over and above, and will be hired to teach any thing as an oracle of God, which they know will please and gain them an interest. (3.) The prophets it should seem had honorary fees given them by way of gratuity, *1 Sam. ix. 7, 8*. But these prophets govern themselves in their prophesying by the prospect of temporal advantage, and that was the main thing they had in their eye : they *divine for money*, their tongues were mercenary, they would either prophesy or let it alone, according as they found was most for their advantage ; and a man might have what oracle he would from them if he would but pay them for it, the successors of Balaam who *loved the wages of unrighteousness*. Note, Though that which is wicked can never be consecrated by a zeal for the church, yet that which is sacred may be, and often is *desecrated* by the love of the world. When men do that which in itself is good, but do it for *filthy lucre*, it loses its excellency, and becomes an abomination both to God and man.

2. Their vain presumption and carnal confidence notwithstanding ; they *lean upon the Lord*, and because they are in profession his people, they think there is neither harm nor danger in these wicked practices of theirs. Faith *builds upon the Lord*, rests in him, and relies upon him, as the soul's foundation : presumption only *leans upon the Lord* as a prop, makes use of him to serve a turn, while still the world is the foundation that is *built upon*. They speak with a great deal of confidence, (1.) Of their honour, *Is not the Lord among us ?* have we not the tokens of his presence with us, his temple, his ark, his lively oracles ? they are *haughty because of the holy mountain*, and the dignities of that, *Zeph. iii. 11*. as if their church-privileges would palliate the worst of practices ; or as if God's presence with them were intended to make the priests and people rich with the sale of their performances. It was true that the Lord was among them by his ordinances, and this puffed them up with pride ; but if they imagined that he was among them by his favour and love, they were mistaken ; but it is a cheat the children of men often put upon themselves, to think they have God with them, when they have by their sin provoked him to depart from them. (2.) They are confident of their own safety, *no evil can come upon us*. Many are rocked asleep in a fatal security by their church-privileges, as if those would protect them in sin and shelter them from punishment, which are really and will be the greatest aggravations both of their sin and of their punishment. If men's having the Lord among them will not restrain them from doing evil, it can never secure them from suffering evil for so doing ; and it is very absurd for sinners to think that their *impudence* will be their impunity.

3. The doom passed upon them for their real wickedness, notwithstanding their imaginary protection, *ver. 12*. *Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field*. This is that passage which is quoted as a bold word spoken by Micah, *Jer. xvi. 18*. which yet Hezekiah and his princes took well, though in another reign it might have gone near to cost him his head : nay they repented and reformed, and so the execution of this threatening was prevented, and did not come in these days. (1.) It is the ruin of *holy places* that is here foretold, places that had been highly honoured with the tokens of God's presence, and the performances of his worship ; it is Zion that shall be *ploughed as a field*, the building burnt to the ground, and levelled with it. Some observe that this was literally fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, when the ground was ploughed up on which the city stood, in token of its utter desolation, and that no city should be built upon that ground without the Emperor's leave. Even Jerusalem the holy city shall become *heaps of ruins*, and the *mountain of the house* on which the temple is built shall be overgrown with briars and thorns, *as the high places of the forest*. If sacred places be polluted by sin they must expect to be wasted and ruined by the judgments of God. (2.) It is the wickedness of those who presume in them that brings the ruin ; it is for your sake that *Zion shall be ploughed as a field* ; you pretend to *build up Zion*, but doing it by blood and iniquity you pull it down. Note, The sin of priests and princes is often the ruin of states and churches. *Desirant reges, plebsuntur Achivi*.

## CHAP. IV.

Comparing this chapter with the close of the foregoing chapter, the comfortable promises here, with the terrible threatenings there, we may with the apostle behold the goodness and severity of God, *Rom. xi. 22*. towards the Jewish church which fell, severity, when Zion was ploughed as a field ; but towards the Christian church which was built upon the ruins of it, goodness, great goodness ; for it is here promised. (1.) That it shall be advanced and enlarged, by the accession of the nations to it, *ver. 1, 2*. (2.) That it shall be protected in tranquillity and peace, *ver. 3, 4*. (3.) That it shall be kept close and constant, and faithful to God, *ver. 5*. (4.) That under Christ's government all its grievances should be redressed, *ver. 6, 7*. (5.) That it shall have an ample and flourishing dominion, *ver. 8*. (6.) That its troubles should be brought to a happy issue at length, *ver. 9, 10*. (7.) That its enemies should be disappointed, nay, that they should be destroyed in and by their attempts against it, *ver. 11—13*.

1. BUT in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills ; and people shall flow unto it. 2. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths : for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 3. ¶ And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off ; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 4. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree ; and none shall make them afraid : for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. 5. For all people will walk in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever. 6. In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted ; 7. And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation : and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

It is a very comfortable but with which this chapter begins, and very reviving to those who lay the interests of God's church near their heart, and are concerned for the welfare of it. When we sometimes see the *corruptions* of the church, especially of church rulers ; princes, priests, and prophets, seeking their own things and not the things of God : and when we soon after see the *desolations* of the church, Zion for their sakes *ploughed as a field*, we are ready to fear it will one day perish between both, that the name of Israel shall be no more in remembrance ; are ready to give up all for gone, and to conclude the church will have neither root nor branch upon earth ; but let not our faith fail in this matter ; out of the ashes of the church another phoenix shall arise. In the last words of the foregoing chapter, we left the *mountain of the house* as desolate and waste as the *high places of the forest*, and is it possible that such a wilderness should ever become a fruitful field again ? Yes, the first words of this chapter bring in the *mountain of the Lord's house* as much dignified by being frequented, as ever it had been disgraced by being deserted. Though Zion be ploughed as a field, yet God has not *cast off his people*, but by the fall of the Jews salvation is come to the Gentiles, so that it proves to be the riches of the world, *Rom. xi. 11, 12*. This is the mystery which God by the prophet here *shows us*, and he saith the very same in the three first verses of this chapter, which another prophet said by the word of the Lord at the same time, *Isa. ii. 2, 3, 4*. that *out of the mouth of these two witnesses* these promises might be established ; and very precious promises they are, relating to the gospel church, which have been in part accomplished, and will be yet more and more, for he is faithful that has promised,

1. That there shall be a church for God set up in the world after the desolation and destruction of the Jewish church, and this in the last days ; that is, as some of the rabbins themselves acknowledge, *in the days of the Messiah*. The people of God shall be incorporated by a new charter, a new spiritual way of worship shall be enacted, and a new institution of offices to attend it ; better privileges shall be granted by this new charter, and better provision made for the enlarging and establishing the kingdom of God among men than had been made by the Old Testament constitution. The *mountain of the house of the Lord* shall again appear firm ground for God's faithful worshippers to stand and go and build upon, in their attendance on him,

ver.



ver. 1. And it shall be a center of unity to them, a church shall be set up in the world to which the Lord will be daily adding such as shall be saved.

2. That this church shall be firmly founded and well built, it shall be established in the top of the mountains; Christ himself will build it upon a rock, it shall be an impregnable fort upon an immovable foundation, so that the gates of hell shall neither overthrow the one, nor undermine the other, Matt. xvi. 18. its foundations are still in the holy mountains, Psal. lxxvii. 1. the everlasting mountains, which cannot, and shall not be removed. It shall be established, not as the temple, upon one mountain, but upon many, for the foundations of the church as they are sure, so they are large.

3. That it shall be highly advanced and become eminent and conspicuous; it shall be exalted above the hills, observed with wonder for its growing greatness from small beginnings; the kingdom of Christ shall shine with greater lustre than ever any of the kingdoms of the earth did. It shall be as a city on a hill which cannot be hid, Matt. v. 14. The glory of this latter house is greater than that of the former, Hag. ii. 9. See 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, &c.

4. That there shall be a great accession of converts to it, and succession of converts in it. People shall flow unto it as the waters of a river are continually flowing, there shall be a constant stream of believers flowing in from all parts into the church, as the people of the Jews flowed into the temple while it was standing, to worship there. Then many tribes came to the mountain of the house to enquire of God's temple: but in gospel times many nations shall flow into the church, shall fly like a cloud, and as the doves to their windows; for ministers shall be sent forth to disciple all nations, and they shall not labour in vain; for multitudes being wrought upon to believe the gospel and embrace the Christian religion, they shall excite and encourage one another, and shall say, Come and let us go up to the mountains of the Lord now raised among us, even to the house of the God of Jacob; the spiritual temple which we need not travel far to, for it is brought to our doors and set up in the midst of us. Thus shall people be made willing in the day of his power, Psal. cx. 3. and shall do what they can to make others willing, as Andrew invited Peter, and Philip Nathanael, to be acquainted with Christ. They shall call the people to the mountains, Dent. xxxiii. 19. for there is in Christ enough for all, enough for each. Now observe what it is, (1.) Which these converts expect to find in the house of the God of Jacob; they come thither for instruction, he will teach us of his ways, what is the way in which he should have us to walk with him, and in which we may depend upon him to meet us graciously. Note, When we come to worship God, we come to be taught of him. (2.) Which they engage to do when they are thus taught of God; we will walk in his paths. Note, Those may comfortably expect that God will teach them who are firmly resolved by his grace to do as they are taught.

5. That in order to this a new revelation shall be published to the world on which the church should be founded, and by which multitudes should be brought into it; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The gospel is here called the word of the Lord, so the Lord gave the word, and great was the company of them that published it, Psal. lxxviii. 11. It was of a divine original, a divine authority, it began to be spoken by the Lord Christ himself, Heb. ii. 3. And it is a law a law; of faith, we are under the law to Christ; this was to go forth from Jerusalem, from Zion, the metropolis of the Old Testament dispensation, where the temple and altars and oracles were, and whither the Jews went to worship from all parts, thence the gospel must take rise, to shew the connection between the Old Testament and the New, that the gospel is not set up in opposition to the law, but is an explication and illustration of it, and a branch growing out of its roots. It was in Jerusalem that Christ preached and wrought miracles, there he died, rose again, and ascended; there the Spirit was poured out, and those that were to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations were ordered to begin at Jerusalem, so that thence flowed the streams that were to water the desert world.

6. That a convincing power should go along with the gospel of Christ in all places where it should be preached, ver. 3. He shall judge among many people: Messiah the lawgiver, ver. 2. is here the judge, for to him the Father committed all judgment, and for judgment he came into this world; his word, the word of his gospel that was to go forth from Jerusalem, was the golden sceptre by which he shall rule and judge, when he sits as king on the holy hill of Zion, Psal. ii. 6. By it he shall rebuke strong nations afar off, for the Spirit working with the word shall reprove the world, John xvi. 8. It is promised to the Son of David that he shall judge among the heathen, Psal. cx. 6. which he doeth when in the chariot of his everlasting gospel, he goes forth and goes on conquering and to conquer.

7. That a disposition to mutual peace and love should be the happy effect of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah. They shall beat their swords into plough-shares, i. e. angry, passionate men that have been fierce and furious, shall be wonderfully sweetened, and made mild and meek, Tit. iii. 2, 3. They that before their conversion did injuries, and would bear none, after their conversion can bear injuries, but will do none. As far as the gospel prevails, it makes men peaceable, for such is the wisdom from above, it is gentle and easy to be entreated. And if nations were but leavened by it, there would be an universal peace. When Christ was born there was an universal peace in the Roman empire; those that were first brought into the gospel church were all of one heart and of one soul, Heb. iv. 32. And it was observed of the primitive Christians, how well they loved one another: in heaven this will have its full accomplishment. It is promised, (1.) That none shall be quarrelsome; the art of war instead of being improved, (which some reckon the glory of a kingdom) shall be forgotten and laid aside as useless, they shall not learn war any more as they had done, for they shall have no need to defend themselves, nor any inclination to offend their neighbours: Nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation: not that the gospel will make men cowards, but it will make men peaceable. (2.) That all shall be quiet, both from evil and from the fear of evil, ver. 4. They shall sit safely and none shall disturb them; they shall sit securely and shall not disturb themselves, every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, enjoying the fruit of them, and needing no other shelter but the leaves of them. None shall make them afraid, not only there shall be nothing that is likely to frighten them, but they shall not be disposed to fear; under the dominion of Christ, as that of Solomon, there shall be abundance of peace. Though his followers have trouble in the world, in him they enjoy great tranquillity. If this seems unlikely, yet we may depend upon it, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and no word of his shall fall to the ground; what he hath spoken by his word, he will do by his providence and grace. He that is the Lord of hosts will be the God of peace, and those may well be easy whom the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, undertakes the protection of.

8. That the churches shall be constant in their duty, and so shall make a good use of their tranquillity, and shall not provoke the Lord to deprive them of it, ver. 5. When the churches have rest they shall be edified, and confirmed, and comforted, and shall resolve to be as firm to their God as other nations are to theirs though they be no gods. Where we find the foregoing promises, Isa. iii. 2, &c. it follows, ver. 5. O house of Jacob, Vol. II. No. CXLIX.\*

come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord, and here we will walk in the name of the Lord our God. Note. Then peace is a blessing indeed, when it strengthens our resolutions to cleave to the Lord. Observe, (1.) How constant other nations were to their gods; all people will walk every one in the name of his god, will own their god and cleave to him, will worship their God and serve him, will depend upon him, and put a confidence in him. Whatever men make a god of they will make use of and take his name along with them in all their actions and affairs. The mariners in a storm cried every man to his god, Jonah i. 5. And no instance could be found of a nation's changing their gods, Jer. ii. 11. If the hosts of heaven were their gods, they loved them, and served them, and walked after them, Jer. viii. 6. (2.) How constant God's people now resolved to be to him, We will walk in the name of the Lord our God, will acknowledge him in all our ways, and govern ourselves by a continual regard to him, doing nothing but what we have warrant from him for, and openly professing our relation to him. Observe, their resolution is peremptory, it is not a thing that needs be disputed, We will walk in the name of the Lord our God, it is just and reasonable, he is our God, and it is a resolution for a perpetuity, we will do it for ever and ever, and will never leave him. He will be ours for ever, and therefore so we will be his, and never repent our choice.

9. That notwithstanding the dispersions, distresses, and infirmities of the church, it shall be formed and established, and made very considerable, ver. 6, 7. (1.) The state of the church had been low and weak, and very helpless in the latter times of the Old Testament, partly through the corruptions of the Jewish nation, and partly through the oppressions under which they groaned: They were like a flock of sheep that were maimed, worried, and scattered, Ezek. xxxiv. 16. Jer. i. 6—17. The good people among them and in other places that were well inclined, were dispersed, were very infirm, and in a manner lost and cast far off. (2.) It is promised that all these grievances shall be redressed, and the distemper healed. Christ will come himself, Matth. xv. 24. and send his apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matth. x. 6. From among the Jews that had, or that for want of strength could not go upright, God gathered a remnant, (ver. 7.) that remnant according to the election of grace, which is spoken of in Rom. xi. 7. which embraced the gospel of Christ. And from among the Gentiles that were cast far off, (so the Gentiles are described to be, Eph. ii. 13. Acts ii. 39.) he raised a strong nation, greater numbers of them were brought into the church than of the Jews, Gal. iv. 27. And such a strong nation the gospel church is that the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against it. The church of Christ is more numerous than any other nation, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

10. That the Messiah should be the king of this kingdom, shall protect and govern it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, and this to the end of time. The Lord Jesus shall reign over them in mount Zion by his word and Spirit in his ordinances, and this from henceforth and for ever, for of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

8. ¶ And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion: the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. 9. Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? Is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail. 10. Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies. 11. Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eyes look upon Zion. 12. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. 13. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thine hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the LORD of the whole earth.

These verses concern Zion and Jerusalem, here called the tower of the flock, or the tower of Edar, we read of such a place, Gen. xxxv. 21. near Bethlehem; and some conjecture it is the same place where the shepherds were keeping their flocks when the angels brought them tidings of the birth of Christ, and some think Bethlehem itself is here spoken of, as chap. v. 2. Some think it is a tower at that gate of Jerusalem which is called the sheep-gate, Neh. iii. 32. and conjecture that through that gate Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem. However it seems to be put for Jerusalem itself, or for Zion the tower of David; all the sheep of Israel flocked thither three times a year: it was the strong-hold (Ophel, which is also the name of a place in Jerusalem, Neh. iii. 27.) or cattle of the daughter of Zion. Now here,

1. We have a promise of the glories of the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel church, which is the tower of the flock, that one fold in which all the sheep of Christ are protected under one shepherd; unto thee shall it come, that which thou hast long wanted and wished for, even the first dominion, a dignity and power equal to that of David and Solomon, by whom Jerusalem was first raised; that kingdom shall again come to the daughter of Jerusalem, which it was deprived of at the captivity. It shall make as great a figure, and shine with as much lustre among the nations, and have as much influence upon them as ever it had; this is the first or chief dominion; now this had by no means its accomplishment in Zerubbabel, his was nothing like the first dominion, either in respect of splendor and sovereignty at home, or the extent of power abroad; and therefore it must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah, (and to that the Chaldee paraphrase refers it) and had its accomplishment when God gave to our Lord Jesus the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32 set him king upon the holy hill of Zion, and gave him the heathen for his inheritance, Psal. x. 6. made him his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth, Psal. lxxxix. 27. Dan. vii. 14. David in spirit called him Lord, and (as Dr. Pocock observes) he witnessed of himself, and his witness was true, that he was greater than Solomon, none of their dominion being like his for extent and duration: The common people welcomed Christ into Jerusalem with hosannas to the Son of David, to shew that it was the first dominion that came to the daughter of Zion, and the evangelist applies it to the promise of Zion's king coming to her, Matth. xxi. 5. Zech. ix. 9. Some give this



sense of the words to Zion and Jerusalem, that tower of the flock, to the nation of the Jews, *came the first dominion*, i. e. there the kingdom of Christ was first set up, the *gospel of the kingdom* was first preached, Luke xxiv. 47. there Christ was first called *King of the Jews*.

2. This is illustrated by a prediction of the calamities of the literal Jerusalem, to which some favour and relief should be granted, as a type and figure of what God would do for the gospel Jerusalem in the last days, notwithstanding its distresses. We have here,

1. Jerusalem put in pain by the providences of God: she *cries out aloud* that all her neighbours may take notice of her griefs: because there is *no king in her*, none of that honour and power she used to have; instead of ruling the nations, as she did when she *sat a queen*, she is ruled by them, and become a captive; her *counsellors are perished*, she is no longer at her own dispose, but is given up to the will of her enemies, and is governed by their counsellors; *Pangs have taken her*. (1.) She is carried captive to Babylon, and there is in *pangs of grief*, she *goes forth out of the city*, and is constrained to *dwell in the field*, exposed to all manner of inconveniences; she *goes even to Babylon*, and there wears out seventy tedious years in a miserable captivity, all that while in *pain*, as a *woman in travail* waiting to be delivered, and thinking the time very long. (2.) When she is delivered out of Babylon, and redeemed from the hand of her enemies there, yet still she is in *pangs of fear*, the end of one trouble is but the beginning of another; for *now also*, when Jerusalem is in the re-building, *many nations are gathered against her*, ver. 11. they were so in Ezra's and Nehemiah's time, and did all they could to obstruct the building of the temple and the wall; they were so in the time of the Maccabees, they said, *Let her be defiled*, let her be looked upon as a place polluted with sin, and be forsaken and abandoned, both of God and man; let her holy places be *profaned*, and all her honours laid in the dust; *let our eyes look upon Zion*, and *please itself* with the sight of its ruins, as it is said of Edom, *Obad. 12. Thou shouldest not have looked upon the day of thy brother*; let our eyes see our desire upon Zion, the day we have long wished for. When they hear the enemies thus combine against them, and insult over them, no wonder that they are in *pain*, and cry aloud, *Without are fightings, within are fears*.

2. Jerusalem made easy by the promises of God; *Why dost thou cry out aloud?* Let thy griefs and fears be silenced, indulge not thyself in them. for though things are bad with thee, they shall *end well*; the pangs are great, but they are like those of a *woman in travail*, ver. 9. that labours to bring forth, ver. 11. the issue of which will be good at last; Jerusalem's pangs are not as *dying agonies*, but as *travailing throes*, which after a while will be forgotten for joy that a child is born into the world. Let the literal Jerusalem comfort herself with this, that whatever straits she may be reduced to, she shall continue until the coming of the Messiah, for there his kingdom must be first set up; and she shall not be destroyed while that blessing is in her, and when at length she is plowed as a field, and become *heaps*, as is threatened, *chap. iii. 12.* yet her privileges shall be *resigned* to the spiritual Jerusalem, and in that the promises made to her shall be fulfilled. Let Jerusalem be easy then, for,

1. Her captivity in Babylon shall have an end, a happy end, ver. 10. *There shalt thou be delivered, and the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies there*; this was done by Cyrus, who acted therein as God's servant: and that deliverance was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, and the release from our spiritual bondage, which is proclaimed in the everlasting gospel, that *acceptable year of the Lord*, in which Christ himself preached *liberty to the captives*, and the *opening of the prison to them that were bound*, Luke iv. 18, 19.

2. The designs of her enemies against her afterwards shall be baffled, nay, they shall turn upon themselves, ver. 12, 13. They promise themselves a day of it, but it shall prove *God's day*. They are *gathered against Zion* to destroy it, but it shall prove to their own destruction, which Israel and his God shall have the glory of. (1.) Their coming together against Zion shall be the occasion of their ruin. They *associate themselves and gird themselves*, that they may break Jerusalem in pieces, but it will prove that they shall be *broken in pieces*, Isa. viii. 9. They *know not the thoughts of the Lord*; when they are gathering together, and providence favours them in it, they little think what God is designing by it, nor do they *understand his counsel*: they know what they aim at in coming together, but they know not what God aims at in bringing them together; they aim at Zion's ruin, but God aims at *theirs*. Note, When men are made use of as instruments of providence in accomplishing its purposes, it is very common for them to intend one thing, and God intend the quite contrary. The king of Assyria is to be a rod in God's hand for the correction of his people, in order to their reformation; *howbeit he meaneth not so, neither does his heart think so*, Isa. x. 7. And thus it is here; the nations are gathered against Zion, as soldiers into the field, but God *gathers them as sheaves into the floor*, to be beaten to pieces; and they could not have been so easily, so effectually destroyed, if they had not *gathered together against Zion*. Note, The designs of enemies for the ruin of the church often prove ruining to themselves; and thereby they prepare themselves for destruction, and put themselves in the way of it; they are *snared in the work of their own hands*. (2.) Zion shall have the honour of being victorious over them, ver. 13. when they are *gathered as sheaves into the floor*, to be trodden down, as the corn then was by the oxen, then *arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion*; instead of fearing them and fleeing from them, boldly set upon them, and take the opportunity providence favours thee with of trampling upon them. Plead not thine own weakness, and that thou art not a match for so many confederated enemies, God will make *thy horn iron*, to push them down, and *thy hoofs brass*, to tread upon them when they are down; and thus thou shalt *beat in pieces many people*, that have long been beating thee in pieces. Thus when God pleaseth, *the daughter of Babylon is made a threshing-floor, it is time to thresh her*, Jer. li. 33. and the *worm Jacob* is made a *threshing instrument*, with which God will *thresh the mountains, and make them as chaff*, Isa. xli. 14, 15. How strangely, how happily are the tables turned, since Jacob was the *threshing-floor*, and Babylon the *threshing-instrument*! Isa. xxi. 10. Note, When God has conquering work for his people to do, he will furnish them with strength and ability for it, will make the *horn iron* and the *hoofs brass*; and when he doth so, they must exert the power he gives them, and execute the commission; even the daughter of Zion must *arise and thresh*. (3.) The glory of the victory shall redound to God; Zion shall *thresh these sheaves in the floor*, but the corn threshed out, shall be a *meat-offering* at God's altar: *I will consecrate their grain unto the Lord*, (i. e. I will have it consecrated) and *their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth*: the spoils gained by Zion's victory, shall be brought into the sanctuary and devoted to God, either in part, as those of Midian, *Numb. xxxi. 28.* or in whole, as those of Jericho, *Josh. vi. 17.* God is Jehovah, the fountain of being, he is the *Lord of the whole earth*, the fountain of power; and therefore *needs not any of our gain or substance, but may challenge and demand it all* if he pleaseth; and with ourselves we must devote all we have to his honour, to be employed as he directs: Thus far all we have must have *holiness* to the Lord written upon it, all our *gain and substance* must be *consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth*, Isa. xxiii. 18. And extraordinary successes call

for extraordinary acknowledgments, whether they be of spoils in war or gains in trade. It is God that *gives us power to get wealth*, which way soever it is honestly got, and therefore he must be *honoured* with what we get. Some make all this to point at the defeat of Sennacherib when he besieged Jerusalem, others to the destruction of Babylon, others to the successes of the Maccabees; but the learned Dr. Pocock and others think it had its full accomplishment in the spiritual victories obtained by the gospel of Christ over the powers of darkness that fought against it. The *nations* thought to have ruined Christianity in its infancy, but it was *victorious* over them; those that persisted in their enmity were *broken to pieces*, Matth. xxi. 44. particularly the Jewish nation: but multitudes by divine grace were *gained* to the church; and they and *their substance* were consecrated to the Lord Jesus, the *Lord of the whole earth*.

## CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A prediction of the troubles and distresses of the Jewish nation, ver. 1. (2.) A promise of the Messiah, and of his kingdom to support the people of God in the day of these troubles. (1.) Of the birth of the Messiah, ver. 2, 3. (2.) Of his advancement, ver. 4. (3.) Of his protection of his people, and his victory over his and their enemies, ver. 5, 6. (4.) Of the great increase of the church, and the blessings that shall come to the world by it, ver. 7. (5.) Of the destruction of the enemies of the church, both those without that attack it, and those within that expose it, ver. 8—15.

1. NOW gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops; he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. 2. But thou Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. 3. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth have brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. 4. ¶ And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. 5. And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. 6. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

Here, as before, we have,

1. The abasement and distress of Zion, ver. 1. The Jewish nation for many years before the captivity dwindled and fell into disgrace: now *gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops*. It is either a summons to Zion's enemies, that had troops at their service, to come and *do their worst against her*, God will suffer them to do it; or a challenge to Zion's friends that had troops too at command, to come and *do their best for her*, let them *gather in troops*, yet it should be to no purpose; for, saith the prophet in the name of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *he hath laid siege against us*. The king of Assyria has, the king of Babylon has, and we know not which way to defend ourselves; so that the enemies shall gain their point, and prevail so far as to *smite the judge of Israel*, the king, the chief justice, and the other inferior judges, *with a rod upon the cheek*, in contempt of them and their dignity; having made them prisoners they shall use them as shamefully as any of the common captives. Complaint had been made of the judges of Israel, *chap. iii. 12.* that they were corrupt and took bribes, and this disgrace came justly upon them for abusing their power; yet it was a great calamity to Israel, to have their judges treated thus ignominiously. Some make this the reason why the troops shall lay siege to Jerusalem, that is, the Roman army, because the Jews shall *smite the judge of Israel upon the cheek*, because of the indignities they shall do to the Messiah the judge of Israel, whom they smote on the cheek, saying, *Prophecy, who smote thee*. But the former sense seems more probable, and that it is meant of the besieging of Jerusalem, not by the Romans but the Chaldeans, and was fulfilled in the indignities done to king Zedekiah and the princes of the house of David.

2. The advancement of Zion's king; having shewed how low the house of David should be brought, and how vilely the shield of that mighty family should be cast away, as though it had not been anointed with oil; to encourage the faith of God's people, who might be tempted now to think that his covenant with David and his house was abrogated, according to the psalmist's complaint, *Psal. lxxxix. 38, 39.* he adds an illustrious prediction of the Messiah and his kingdom, in whom that covenant should be established, and the honours of that house should be revived, advanced, and perpetuated. Now let us see,

1. How the Messiah is here described; it is he that is to be *ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, from the days of eternity*, as the word is. Where we have, (1.) His existence from eternity as God: his *goings forth* or *emanations*, as the going forth of the beams from the sun, were, or have been of *old, from everlasting*; which (saith Dr. Pocock) is so signal a description of Christ's eternal generation, or his going forth as the Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, that this prophecy must belong only to him, and could never be verified of any other. It certainly speaks of a going forth that was now past, when the prophet spoke, and cannot but be read as we read it, his *out-goings have been*; and the putting of both these words together, which severally are used to denote eternity, plainly shew that they must here be taken in the strictest sense, the same with *Psal. xc. 2. From everlasting to everlasting thou art God*; and can be applied to no other, but to him who was able to say, *Before Abraham was, I am*, John viii. 58. Dr. Pocock observes, that the *going forth* is used, *Deut. viii. 3.* for a *Word* which *proceedeth out of the mouth*, and is therefore very fitly used to signify the eternal generation of him who is called the *Word of God*, that was in the beginning with God, John i. 1, 2. (2.) His office as mediator; he was to be *ruler in Israel*, king of his church, he was to *reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, Luke



Luke i. 32, 33. The Jews object, that our Lord Jesus could not be the Messiah, for he was so far from being ruler in Israel, that Israel ruled over him, and put him to death, and would not have him to reign over them; but he answered that himself, when he said his *kingdom was not of this world*, John xviii. 36. And it is a spiritual Israel that he reigns over, the children of promise, all the followers of believing Abraham, and praying Jacob, in the hearts of these he reigns by his Spirit and grace; and in the society of these by his word and ordinances. And was not he ruler in Israel, whom winds and seas obeyed, and legions of devils were forced to truckle to? And who commanded away diseases from the sick, and called the dead out of their graves? None but he whose goings forth from of old, from everlasting, was fit to be ruler in Israel, to be head of the church, and head over all things to the church.

2. What is here foretold concerning him.

1. That Bethlehem should be the place of his nativity, *ver. 2.* This was the scripture which the Scribes went upon, when with the greatest assurance they told Herod, *where Christ should be born*, Matt. ii. 6. and from hence it was universally known among the Jews, that *Christ comes out of the town of Beth-lehem where David was*, John vii. 42. Beth-lehem signifies *the house of bread*, the fittest place for him to be born in, who is *the bread of life*: And because it was the city of David, by a special providence it was ordered that he should be born there who was to be the *son of David* and his heir and successor for ever. It is called Bethlehem Ephratah, both names of the same city, as appears, Gen. xxxv. 19. It was *little among the thousands of Judah*, not considerable either for the number of the inhabitants, or the figure they made: it had nothing in it worthy to have this honour put upon it: but God in that, as in other instances, chose to *exalt them of low degree*, Luke i. 52. Christ would give honour to the place of his birth, and not derive honour from it; though thou be *little*, yet this shall make thee *great*; and as St. Matthew reads it, *thou art not the least among the princes of Judah*, but upon this account art really honourable above any of them. A relation to Christ will magnify those that are *little in the world*.

2. That in the *fulness of time* he should be *born of a woman*, *ver. 3.* Therefore will he give them up, he will give up his people Israel to distress and trouble, and will defer their salvation, which has been so long promised and expected, *until the time*, the set time, that *she which travaileth has brought forth*, or, as it should be read, *that she who shall bring forth, shall have brought forth*; that the blessed virgin, who was to be the mother of the Messiah, shall have brought him forth at Bethlehem the place appointed. This Dr. Pocock thinks to be the most proper genuine sense of the words. Though the out-goings of the Messiah were from everlasting, yet the redemption of Jerusalem, the consolation of Israel must be waited for, Luke ii. 25—28. until the time that she who should bring forth (so the Virgin Mary is called, as Christ is himself called, *He that should come*), shall bring forth; and in the mean time he will give them up. Divine satisfactions must be waited for until the time fixed for the bringing of them forth.

3. That the remnant of his brethren shall then return to the children of Israel: the remnant of the Jewish nation shall return to the spirit of the true genuine children of Israel, a people in covenant with God; the hearts of the children shall be turned to the fathers, Mal. iv. 6. Some understand it of all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews, they shall all be incorporated into the common wealth of Israel; and as they are all brethren to one another, so he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. ii. 11.

4. That he shall be a glorious prince, and his subjects shall be happy under his government, *ver. 4.* He shall stand and feed, i. e. he shall both teach and rule and shall continue to do so as a good shepherd, with wisdom and care and love: so it was foretold, *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*, shall provide green pastures for them, and under-shepherds to lead them into these pastures. He is the good shepherd that goes before the sheep, and presides among them. He shall do this not as an ordinary man but in the strength of the Lord, as one clothed with a divine power, to go through his work, and break through the difficulties in his way, so as not to fail or be discouraged: he shall do it in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, i. e. so as plainly to evidence that God's name was in him, Exod. xxiii. 21. the majesty of his name, for he taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. The prophets prefaced their messages with, *Thus saith the Lord*; but Christ spoke not as a servant but as a son, *Verily verily, I say unto you*; this was feeding in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; all power was given him in heaven and in earth, a power over all flesh, by virtue of which he still rules in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, a name above every name. Christ's government shall be, (1.) Very happy for his subjects, for they shall abide; they shall be safe and easy, and continue so for ever, because he lives they shall live also: they shall lie down in the green pastures to which he shall lead them: *shall abide in God's tabernacle for ever*, Psal. lxi. 4. His church shall abide, and he in it with it always, even to the end of the world. (2.) It shall be very glorious to himself; now shall he be great to the ends of the earth. Now he stands and feeds his flock, now shall he be great. For Christ reckons it his greatness to do good. Now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, for the uttermost parts of the earth shall be given him for his possession, and the ends of the world shall see his salvation.

5. That he shall secure the peace and welfare of his church and people against all the attempts of his and their enemies, *ver. 5, 6.* This man as king and ruler shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land. This refers to the deliverance of Hezekiah and his kingdom from the power of Sennacherib, who invaded them, in the type; but under the shadow of that is a promise of the safety of the gospel church, and of all believers, from the designs and attempts of the powers of darkness, Satan and all his instruments, the dragon and his angels, that seek to devour the church of the first born, and all that belong to it. Observe, (1.) The peril and danger which Christ's subjects are supposed to be in, the Assyrian, a potent enemy, comes into their land, *ver. 5, 6.* treads within their borders, nay prevails so far as to tread in their palaces; it was a time of treading down and of perplexity, when Sennacherib made a descent upon Judah, took all the fenced cities, and laid siege to Jerusalem, Isa. xxxvi. 1.—xxxvii. 3. This represented the gates of hell fighting against the kingdom of Christ, compassing the camp of the saints and the holy city, and threatening to bear down all before them. When the terrors of the law set themselves in array against a convinced soul, when the temptations of Satan assault the people of God, and the troubles of the world threaten to rob them of all their comforts, then the Assyrian comes into their land, and treads in their palaces; without are fightings, within are fears. (2.) The protection and defence which his subjects are then sure to be under? (1.) Christ will himself be their peace. When the Assyrian comes with such a force into a land, can there be any other peace than a tame submission and an unresisted desolation? Yes, even then the church's king will be the conservator of the church's peace, will be for a hiding place, Isa. xxxiii. 1, 2. Christ is our peace as a priest, making atonement for sin, and reconciling us to God; and he is our peace as a king, conquering our enemies and commanding down disquieting fears and passions; he creates the fruits of the lips, peace. Even when the Assyrian comes into the land, when we are in the greatest distress

and danger, and have received a sentence of death within ourselves, yet this man may be the peace; in me saith Christ, you shall have peace, when in the world you have tribulation; at such a time our souls may dwell at ease, in him. (2.) He will find out proper instruments to be employed for their protection and deliverance, and the defeat of their enemies. Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men, i. e. a competent number of persons, proper to oppose the enemy and make head against him, and protect the church of God in peace; men that shall have the care and tenderness of shepherds and the courage and authority of principal men, or princes of men. Seven and eight is a certain number for an uncertain. Note, When God has work to do he will not want fitting instruments to do it with; and when he pleaseth he can do it by a few; he need not rise thousands, but seven or eight principal men may serve the turn, if God be with them. Magistrates and ministers are shepherds and principal men, raised in defence of religion's righteous cause, against the powers of sin and Satan in the world. (3.) The opposition given to the church shall be got over, and the opposers brought down. This is represented by the laying of Assyria and Chaldee waste, which two nations were the most formidable enemies to the Israel of God, of any other, and the destruction of them signified the making of Christ's enemies his footstool. They shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrance thereof; they shall make inroads upon the land, and put all to the sword that they find in arms. Note, Those that threaten ruin to the church of God, hasten ruin to themselves. And their destruction is the church's salvation; thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian. When Satan fell as lightning from heaven before the preaching of the gospel, and Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them, were slain before him, then this was fulfilled.

7. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarried not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. 8. ¶ And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. 9. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. 10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots. 11. And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds: 12. And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers. 13. Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. 14. And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so I will destroy thy cities. 15. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

Glorious things are here spoken of the remnant of Jacob; that remnant which was raised of her that halted, chap. iv. 7. And it seems to be that remnant which the Lord our God shall call, Joel ii. 32. on whom the Spirit shall be poured out; the remnant that shall be saved, Rom. ix. 27. Note, God's people are but a remnant, a small number, in comparison with the many that are left to perish: a little flock; but they are the remnant of Jacob, a people in covenant with God, and in his favour.

Now concerning this remnant it is here promised,

1. That they shall be as a dew in the midst of the nations, *ver. 7.* God's church is dispersed all the world over; it is in the midst of many people, as gold in the ore, wheat in the heap: *Uti l.* according to the flesh dwelt alone, and was not numbered among the nations; but the spiritual Israel lies scattered in the midst of many people, as the salt of the earth, or as seed sown in the ground, here a grain, and there a grain, Hos. ii. 23. Now this remnant shall be as dew from the Lord. (1.) They shall be of a heavenly extraction, as dew from the Lord, who is the father of the rain, and hath begotten the drops of the dew, Job xxxviii. 28. They are born from above, and are not of the earth, favouring of the things of the earth. (2.) They shall be numerous, as the drops of dew in a summer's morning, Psal. cx. 3. Thou hast the dew of thy youth. (3.) They shall be pure and clear, not muddy and corrupt, but crystal drops, as the water of life. (4.) They shall be produced silently and without noise, as the dew that distils insensibly; we know not how; such is the way of the Spirit. (5.) They shall live in a continual dependence upon God, and be still deriving from him, as the dew, which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men; they should not rely upon human aids and powers, but on divine grace; for they are, and own that they are no more than what the free grace of God makes them every day. (6.) They shall be great blessings to those among whom they live, as the dew and the showers are to the grass, to make it grow without the help of man, or the sons of men. Their doctrine, example and prayers, shall make them as dew to soften and moisten others, and make them fruitful. Their speech shall distil as the dew, Deut. xxxii. 2. and all about them shall wait for them as for the rain, Job xxix. 23. The people among whom they live, shall be as the grass, which flourisheth only by the blessing of God, and not by the art and care of man: they shall be beneficial to those about them by drawing down God's blessings on them as Jacob and Laban's house; and by cooling and mitigating God's wrath, which otherwise would burn them up, as the dew preserves the grass from being scorched by the sun; so Dr. Pocock. They shall be mild and gentle in their behaviour like their master, who comes down like rain upon the new mown grass, Psal. lxxii. 6.

2. That they shall be as a lion among the beasts of the forest, that treads down and tears in pieces, *ver. 8.* As they shall be silent, and gentle and communicative of all good, to those that receive the truth in the love of it, so they shall be bold as a lion in witnessing against the corruptions of the time and places they live in, and strong as a lion in the strength of God, to resist and overcome their spiritual enemies. The weapons of their warfare are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. They shall have courage, which all their adversaries shall not be able to resist, Luke xxi. 15. as when the lion tears, none can deliver. When infidelity is silenced, and all iniquity made to stop her mouth, when sinners are convinced and converted by the power of the gospel, in the doctrine of its ministers, and conversation of its professors, then the remnant of Jacob is



is like a lion. This is explained, *ver. 9. Thine hand shall lift me up upon thine adversaries*; the church shall have the upper-hand at last of all that oppose her. Her enemies shall be cut off, i. e. they shall cease to be enemies, their enmity shall be cut off: Christ's arrows of conviction shall be sharp in their hearts, so that they shall fall under him, i. e. they shall yield themselves subjects to him, *Psal. xlv. 5. and be happily conquered and subdued, Psal. cx. 2.*

3. That they shall be brought off from all carnal confidences, which they had relied on; that by the providence of God they shall enjoy such a security, as that they should not need them; and by the grace of God they should be brought to see the folly of them, and come off from them. It was the sin of Israel, that they furnished themselves extravagantly with horses and chariots, and were soothsayers and idolaters, see *Isa. ii. 6, 7, 8.* But here it is promised that they shall not regard them any more. The tranquillity of the kingdom of Christ is intended in that promise, which explains this, *Zech. ix. 10. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem.* Note, It is a great mercy to be deprived of those things which we have reposed a confidence in, in competition with God; which we have made our arm, and after which we have gone a whoring from God. Let us observe the particulars. (1.) They had trusted in chariots and horses, and multiplied them, *Psal. xx. 7.* but now God will cut off their horses and destroy their chariots, *ver. 10. as David houghed the chariot horses, 2 Sam. viii. 4.* They shall not have them, lest they should be tempted to trust in them. (2.) They depended upon their strong holds and fortified cities for their security, but God will take care that they be demolished, *ver. 11. I will cut off the cities of thy land, i. e. I will throw down thy strong holds*; they shall have them for habitations, but not for garrisons, for God will be their only place of defence, their high tower and their deliverer. (3.) Many of them depended much upon the conduct and advice of their conjurors, diviners and fortune-tellers, and those God will cut off not only as weak things and insufficient to relieve them, but as wicked things and sufficient to ruin them, *ver. 12. I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand, that thou shalt no more take hold of them, and slay thyself upon them, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers, for thou shalt be convinced that all their pretensions are a cheat.* The justice of the nation shall cut them off according to the law, *Lev. xx. 27.* the preaching of the gospel brought men off from using curious arts, *Acts xix. 19.* (4.) Many of them had said to the work of their hands, Ye are our gods, but now idolatry shall be abolished and abandoned, *ver. 13. Thy graven images will I cut off, and thy standing images, both those that were moveable, and those that were fixed*; they shall be destroyed by the power of the law of Moses, and deserted by the power of the gospel of Christ, so that thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands, but be ashamed that ever thou hast been so deluded. Among other monuments of idolatry, *I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee, ver. 14.* which were planted and preserved in honour of their idols, and used in the worship of them; these they were ordered to burn, *Deut. xii. 2, 3.* and if they do not, God will; so as that they shall not have them to trust to. And so will I destroy thy cities, meaning the cities that were dedicated to the idols, to some or other dunghill deity; which they confided in for their protection.

4. That those who stand it out against the gospel of Christ and continue in league with their idolatries and witchcrafts shall fall under the wrath of God, and be consumed by it, *ver. 15. I will execute vengeance in anger, and fury upon the heathen, i. e. upon heathenism, such as they have not heard*; idolatries shall be done away, and idolaters put to shame. I will execute vengeance upon the heathen which have not heard, so some read it; or which would not hear and receive the doctrine of Christ. God will give his sin either the hearts or the necks of his enemies, and make them either his friends or his footstool.

## C H A P. VI.

After the precious promises in the two foregoing chapters, relating to the Messiah's kingdom, the prophet is here directed to set the sins of Israel in order before them, for their conviction and humiliation, as necessary to make way for the comfort of gospel grace. Christ's forerunner was a reprob, and preached repentance, and so prepared his way. Here, (1.) God enters an action against his people for their base ingratitude, and the ill returns they had made him for his favours, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) He shews the wrong course they took, when they were under conviction, and the frivolous proposals they made, in answer to his charge, and what course they should have taken, *ver. 6—8.* (3.) He calls upon them to hear the voice of his judgments, and sets the sins in order before them for which he still proceeded in his controversy with them, *ver. 9. their injustice, ver. 10—15. and their idolatry, ver. 16. for both which ruin was coming upon them.*

1. **H**EAR ye now what the LORD saith, Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. 2. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. 3. O my people what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. 4. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants, and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

Here, 1. the prefaces to the message are very solemn, and such as may engage our most serious attention. (1.) The people are commanded to give audience, *Hear ye now what the Lord saith*; what the prophet speaks, he speaks from God, and in his name, they are therefore bound to hear it, not as the word of a sinful dying man, but of the holy living God. *Hear now what he saith, for first or last he will be heard.* (2.) The prophet is commanded to speak in earnest, and to put an emphasis upon what he said, *Arise, contend thou before the mountains, or with the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice, if it were possible*: contend with the mountains and hills of Judea, i. e. with the inhabitants of those mountains and hills; and some think reference is had to those mountains and hills on which they worshipped idols, and which by that means were polluted. But it is rather to be taken more generally, as appears by his call, not only to the mountains, but to the strong foundations of the earth; pursuant to the instructions given him.

This is designed, (1.) To excite the earnestness of the prophet; he must speak as vehemently as if he designed to make even the hills and mountain hear him, must cry aloud and not spare; what he had to say in God's name he must proclaim publicly before the mountains, as one that was neither ashamed nor afraid to own his message; he must speak as one concerned, as one that desired to speak to the heart, and therefore appeared to speak from the heart. (2.) To expose the stupidity of the people; let the hills hear thy voice, for this senseless, careless people will not hear it, will not heed it. Let the rocks the foundations of the earth, that have no ears, hear, since Israel that has ears will not hear. It is an appeal to the mountains and hills, let them bear witness that Israel has fair warning given them, and good counsel if they would but take it. Thus Isaiah begins with, *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. Let them judge between God and his vineyard.*

2. The message itself is very affecting; he is to let all the world know that God has a quarrel with his people, good ground for an action against them. Their offences are public, and therefore so are the articles of impeachment exhibited against them. Take notice the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel, will plead by his prophets, plead by his providences, to make good his charge. Note, 1. Sin begets a controversy between God and man. The righteous God has an action against every sinner, an action of debt, an action of trespass, an action of slander. 2. If Israel, God's own professing people, provoke him by sin, he will let them know that he has a controversy with them: he sees sin in them and is displeased with it, nay their sins are more displeasing to him than the sins of others, as they are a greater grief to his Spirit, and dishonour to his name. 3. God will plead with those whom he has a controversy with, will plead with his people Israel that they may be convinced and that he may be justified. In the close of the foregoing chapter he pleaded with the heathen in anger and fury to bring them to ruin, but here he pleads with Israel in compassion and tenderness to bring them to repentance. Come now and let us reason together; God reasons with us, to teach us to reason with ourselves: see the equity of God's cause, it will bear to be pleaded, and sinners themselves will be forced to confess judgment, and to own that God's ways are equal, but their ways are unequal, *Ezek. xviii. 35.*

Now, 1. God here challengeth them to shew what he had done against them which might give them occasion to desert him. They had revolted from God, and rebelled against him, but had they any cause to do so? *ver. 3. O my people, what have I done unto thee? Wherein have I wearied thee?* If subjects quit their allegiance to their prince, they will pretend, as the ten tribes did, when they revolted from Rehoboam, that his yoke is too heavy for them, but can you pretend any such thing? What have I done to you that is unjust or unkind? Wherein have I wearied you, with the impositions of service or the exactions of tribute? Have I made you to serve with an offering? *Isa. xliii. 23. What iniquity have your fathers found in me?* Jer. ii. 5. He never deceived us or disappointed our expectations from him; never did us wrong, or put disgrace upon us; why then do we wrong and dishonour him, and frustrate his expectations from us? Here is a challenge to all that ever were in God's service, to testify against him if they have found him in any thing a hard master, and his demands unreasonable.

2. Since they could not shew any thing he had done against them, he will shew them a great deal that he has done for them, which should have engaged them for ever to his service, *ver. 4, 5.* They are here directed, and we in them, to look a great way back in their reviews of the divine favour: let them remember their former days, their first days, when they were formed into a people, and the great things God did for them.

(1.) When he brought them out of Egypt, the land of their bondage, *ver. 4.* They were content with their slavery, and almost in love with their chains for the sake of the garlic and onions they had plenty of: but God brought them up, inspired them with an ambition of liberty, and animated them with a resolution by a bold effort to shake off their fetters; the Egyptians held them fast, and would not let the people go, but God redeemed them, not by price but by force; out of the house of servants or rather the house of bondage, for it is the same word that is used in the preface of the ten commandments; which insinuates that the same considerations which are arguments for duty, if they be not improved by us, will be improved against us as aggravations of sin. When he brought them out of Egypt, into a vast howling wilderness, as he left not himself without witness, so he left not them without guides, for he sent before them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, three prophets, saith the Chaldee paraphrase: Moses the great prophet of the Old Testament, Aaron his prophet, *Exod. vii. 1.* and Miriam a prophetess, *Exod. xv. 20.* Note, When we are calling to mind God's former mercies to us, we must not forget the mercy of good teachers and governors when we were young, let those be made mention of to the glory of God, who went before us, saying, This is the way, walk in it; it was God that sent them before us, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to prepare a people for him.

(2.) When he brought them into Canaan; God no less glorified himself; and honoured them in what he did for them when he brought them into the land of their rest, than in what he did for them when he brought them out of the land of their servitude. When Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were dead, yet they found God the same. Let them remember now what God did for them. (1.) In baffling and defeating the designs of Balak and Balaam against them, which he did by the power he has over the hearts and tongues of men, *ver. 5.* Let them remember what Balak the king of Moab consulted, what mischief he devised, and designed to do to Israel, when they encamped in the plains of Moab; that which he consulted was, to curse Israel, to divide between them and their God, and to disengage him from the protection of them. Among the heathen, when they made war upon any people, they endeavoured by magic charms or otherwise, to get from them their tutelary gods, as to rob Troy of its Palladium. Macrobius has a chapter, *de ritu evocandi Deos*; this Balak would try against Israel; but remember what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, how contrary to his own intention and inclination, instead of cursing Israel he blessed them, to the extreme confusion and vexation of Balak. Let them remember the malice of the heathen against them, and for that reason never learn the way of the heathen, or associate with them; let them remember the kindness of their God to them, how he turned the curse into a blessing, because the Lord thy God loved thee, as it is, *Deut. xxiii. 5.* and for that reason never forsake him. Note, The disappointing of the devices of the church's enemies, ought always to be remembered to the glory of the church's protector, who can make the answer of the tongue directly to contradict the preparation and consultation of the heart, *Prov. xvi. 1.* (2.) In bringing them from Shittim their last lodgment out of Canaan, unto Gilgal their first lodgment in Canaan. There it was, between Shittim and Gilgal, that upon the death of Moses, Joshua, a type of Christ, was raised up to put Israel in possession of the land of promise, and to fight their battles; there it was that they passed over Jordan through the divided waters, and renewed the covenant of circumcision; these mercies of God to their fathers they must now remember, that they may know the righteousness of the Lord, his righteousnesses, so the word is; his justice in destroying the Canaanites, his goodness in giving rest to his people



people Israel, and his faithfulness to his promise made unto the fathers. The remembrance of what God had done to them might convince them of all this, and engage them for ever to his service. Or they may refer to the controversy now pleaded between God and Israel; let them remember God's many favours to them and their fathers, and compare with them their unworthy, ungrateful carriage towards him, that they may know the righteously of the Lord in contending with them, and it may appear, that in this controversy he has right on his side; his ways are equal, for he will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth.

6. ¶ Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? 7. Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Here is a proposal for accommodation between God and Israel, the parties that were at variance in the beginning of the chapter. Upon the trial, judgment is given against Israel, they are convicted of injustice and ingratitude towards God, the crimes with which they stood charged; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused; and therefore,

1. They express their desires to be at peace with God, upon any terms; ver. 6, 7. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?*

Being made sensible of the justice of God's controversy with them, and dreading the consequences of it, they were inquisitive what they might do to be reconciled to God, and to make him their friend. They apply themselves to a proper person, with this enquiry, to the prophet the Lord's messenger, by whose ministry they had been convinced; who is fit to shew them their way, as he that had made them sensible of their having missed it. And it is observable, that each one speaks for himself, *Wherewith shall I come?* Knowing every one the plague of his own heart, they ask, not what shall this man do? but what shall I do? Note, Deep convictions of guilt and wrath, will put men upon careful enquiries after peace and pardon, and then, and not till then, there begins to be some hopes of them. They enquire wherewith they may come before the Lord, and bow themselves before the high God. They believe there is a God, that he is Jehovah, and that he is the high God, the most High. They whose consciences are convinced, have learned to speak very honourably of God, whom before they spake slightly of. Now, (1.) We know we must come before God; he is the God with whom we have to do; we must come as subjects to pay our homage to him, as beggars to ask alms from him, nay we must come before him, as criminals to receive our doom from him, must come before him as our judge. (2.) When we come before him, we must bow before him; it is our duty to be very humble and reverent in our approaches to him, and when we come before him, there is no remedy but we must submit, it is to no purpose to contend with him. (3.) When we come and bow before him; it is our great concern to find favour with him, and to be accepted of him; their enquiry is, *What will the Lord be pleased with?* Note, All that rightly understand themselves and their own interest, cannot but be solicitous what they must do to please God, to avoid his displeasure, and to obtain his good will. (4.) In order to God's being pleased with us, our care must be, that the sin by which we have displeased him may be taken away, and an atonement made for it. The enquiry here is, *What shall I give for my transgression, for the sin of my soul?* Note, The transgression we are guilty of, is the sin of our soul; for the soul acts it, without the soul's act it is not sin; and the soul suffers by it, it is the disorder, disease, and defilement of the soul, and threatens to be the death of it. *What shall I give for my transgressions?* What will be accepted as a satisfaction of his justice, a reparation of his honour, and what will avail to shelter me from his wrath; (5.) We must therefore ask, *Wherewith we may come before him?* We must not appear before the Lord empty; what shall we bring with us? In what manner must we come? In whose name must we come? We have not that in ourselves which will recommend us to him, but must have it from another; what righteousness then shall we appear before him in?

2. They make proposals, such as they are, in order to it, their enquiry was very good and right, and what we are all concerned to make; but their proposals betray their ignorance, though they shew their zeal; let us examine them, (1.) They bid high. They offer, (1.) That which is very rich and costly, thousands of rams: God required one ram for a sin-offering they proffer flocks of them, their whole stock; will be content to make themselves beggars, so that they may but be at peace with God. They will bring the best they have, the rams, and the most of them, till it comes to thousands. (2.) That which is very dear to them, and which they would be most loth to part with. They could be content to part with their first-born for their transgressions, if that would be accepted as an atonement; and the fruit of their body, for the sin of their soul. To them that were become vain in their imaginations this seemed a probable expedient of making satisfaction for sin, because our children are pieces of ourselves; and therefore the heathen sacrificed their children to appease their offended deities. Note, Those that are thoroughly convinced of sin, of the malignity of it, and of their misery and danger by reason of it, would give all the world, if they had it, for peace and pardon.

(2.) Yet they do not bid right. It is true, some of these things were instituted by the ceremonial law, as the bringing of burnt-offerings to God's altar, and calves of a year old, rams for sin-offerings, and oil for the meat-offerings, but these alone would not recommend them to God; God had often declared that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; that sacrifice and offerings he would not; the legal sacrifices had their virtue and value from the institution, and the reference they had to Christ the great propitiation; but otherwise of themselves, it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. And as to the other things here mentioned, (1.) Some of them are impracticable things, as rivers of oil, which nature has not provided to feed mens luxury, but rivers of water to supply mens necessity. All the proposals of peace but those that are according to the gospel are absurd: one stream of the blood of Christ, is worth ten thousand rivers of oil. (2.) Some of them are wicked things, as to give our first-born and the fruit of our body to death, which would but add to the transgression, and the sin of the soul. He that hates robbery for burnt-offerings much more hateth murder, such murder; what right have we to our first-born and the fruit of our body? do they not belong to God? Are they not his already, and born to him? Are they not sinners by nature, and their lives forfeited upon their own account, how then can they be a ransom for ours? (3.) They are all external things, parts of the bodily

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exercise which profiteth little, and which could not make the comers thereunto perfect. (4.) They are all insignificant, and insufficient, to attain the end proposed; they could not answer the demands of divine justice, nor satisfy the wrong done to God in his honour by sin, nor would they serve in lieu of the sanctification of the heart and the reformation of the life. Men will part with any thing rather than their sins, but they part with nothing to God's acceptance, unless they part with them.

3. God tells them plainly what he demands and insists upon, from that that would be accepted of him, ver. 8. Let their money perish with them, that think the pardon of sin and the favour of God may be so purchased: no, God hath shewed thee, O man, what is good. Here we are told,

1. That God hath made a discovery of his mind and will to us, for the rectifying of our mistakes and the directing of our practice. (1.) It is God himself that hath shewed us what we must do. We need not trouble ourselves to make proposals, the terms are already settled and laid down: he whom we have offended, and to whom we are accountable, hath told us upon what conditions he will be reconciled to us. (2.) It is to man that he hath shewed it; not only to thee, O Israel, but to thee, O man, Gentiles as well as Jews. To men that are rational creatures and capable of receiving the discovery, and not to brutes; to men for whom a remedy is provided, not to devils whose case is desperate. What is spoken to all men every where in general, must by faith be applied to ourselves in particular, as if it were spoken to thee, O man, by name, and to no other. (3.) It is a discovery of that which is good, and which the Lord requires of us. He hath shewed us our end which we should aim at, in shewing us what is good, wherein our true happiness doth consist; he hath shewed us our way in which we must walk towards that end, in shewing us what he requires of us. There is something which God requires we should do for him, and devote to him; and it is good; it is good in itself: there is an innate goodness in moral duties, antecedent to the command: they are not ceremonial observances, therefore good because they are commanded: but therefore commanded because they are good, consonant to the eternal rule and reason of good and evil, which is unalterable. It has likewise a direct tendency to our good; our conformity to it is not only the condition of our future happiness, but is a great expedient of our present happiness; in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward, as well as after keeping them. (4.) It is shewed us; God has not only made it known, but made it plain; he hath discovered it to us with such convincing evidence, as amounts to a demonstration; *Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.*

2. What that discovery is. The good which God requires of us, is not the paying of a price for the pardon of sin and acceptance with God, but doing the duty, which is the condition of our interest in the pardon purchased. (1.) We must do justly, must render to all their due, according as our relation and obligation to them is; must do wrong to none, but do good to all, in their bodies, goods and name. (2.) We must love mercy, we must be just to all we deal with, but kind to all that need us, and that we are in a capacity of doing good to. Nor must we only shew mercy, but we must love mercy, we must delight in it, as our God doth, must be glad of an opportunity to do good, and do it cheerfully. Justice is put before mercy, for we must not give that in aims which is wrongfully got, or with which our debts should be paid; God hates robbery for a burnt-offering. (3.) We must walk humbly with our God: this includes all the duties of the first table. We must take the Lord for our God in covenant, must attend on him and adhere to him as ours, and must make it our constant care and business to please him. Enoch's walking with God is interpreted, Heb. xi. 5. his pleasing God, we must in the whole course of our conversation conform ourselves to the will of God, keep up our communion with God, and study to approve ourselves to him in our integrity; and this we must do humbly, (submitting our understandings to the truths of God, and our wills to his precepts and providences) we must humble ourselves to walk with God, to the margin reads it; every thought within us must be brought down, to be brought into obedience to God, if we would walk comfortably with him. This is that which God requires, and without which the most costly services are vain oblations; this is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

9. The LORD's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. 10. ¶ Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? 11. Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? 12. For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. 13. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins. 14. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied, and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee, and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver: and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. 15. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap: thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. 16. ¶ For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels, that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing; therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

God having shewed them how necessary it was that they should do justly, here shews them how plain it was that they had done unjustly, and since they submitted not to his controversy, nor went the right way to have it taken up, here he proceeds in it. Observe,

1. How the action is entered against them, ver. 9. God speaks to the city, to Jerusalem, to Samaria, his voice cries to it by his servants the prophets, who were to cry aloud and not spare. Note, The voice of the prophets is the Lord's voice, and that cries to the city, cries to the country; doth not wisdom cry? Prov. viii. 1. When the sin of a city cries to God, his voice cries against the city; and when the judgments of God are coming upon a city, his voice first cries unto it; he warns before he wounds, because he is not willing that any should perish. Now observe, (1.) How the voice of God is discerned by some; The man of wisdom will see thy name; when the voice of God cries to us, we may by it see his name, may discern and

perceive



perceive that by which he makes himself known. Yet many see it not, are not aware of it, because they do not regard it; God speaketh once, yet twice, and they perceive it not, Job xxviii. 14. but they that are men of wisdom will see it, and perceive it, and make a good use of it. Note, It is a point of true wisdom to discover the name of God in the voice of God, and to learn what he is, from what he saith; wisdom shall see thy name, for the knowledge of the holy is understanding. (2.) What this voice of God saith to all. Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. Hear the rod when it is coming, hear it at a distance, before you see it and feel it; and be awakened to go forth to meet the Lord in the way of his judgments. Hear the rod when it is come, and is actually upon you, and you are sensible of the smart of it; hear what it saith to you, what convictions, what counsels, what cautions it speaks to you. Note, Every rod has a voice, and it is the voice of God that is to be heard in the rod of God; and it is well for them that understand the language of it; which if we would do, we must have an eye to him that appointed it. Note, Every rod is appointed, of what kind it shall be, where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. God in every affliction performeth the thing that is appointed for us, Job xxiii. 14. and to him therefore we must have an eye, to him we must have an ear; hear what he saith to us by the affliction, hear it, and know it for thy good, Job v. 6. The work of ministers is to explain the providences of God, and to quicken and direct men to learn the lessons that are taught by them.

2. What is the ground of the action, and what are the things that are laid to their charge.

(1.) They are charged with *injustice*, a sin against the second table. Are there yet to be found among them, the marks and means of fraudulent dealing? What, after all the methods that God has taken to teach them to do justly, will they yet deal unjustly? It seems they will, ver. 10. And shall I count them pure? ver. 11. No, this is a sin which will by no means consist with a profession of purity: those that are dishonest in their dealings have not the spots of God's children, and shall never be reckoned pure, whatever their devotion they may make; *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*. When a man is suspected of theft, or fraud, the justice of peace will send a warrant to search his house; God here doth as it were search the houses of these citizens, and there he finds, (1.) *Treasures of wickedness*; abundance of wealth, but it is ill got, and not like to prosper, for *treasures of wickedness profit nothing*. (2.) A scant measure by which they sold to the poor, and so exacted upon them and cheated them. (3.) They had *wicked balances* and a bag of false weights, by which, under a pretence of weighing what they sold, and giving the buyer what was right, they did him the greatest wrong, ver. 11. (4.) Those that had wealth and power in their hands abused it to oppression and extortion; *The rich men thereof are full of violence*; for they that have much would have more, and are in a capacity of making it more, by the power which their abundance of wealth gives them. They are full of violence, i. e. they have their houses full of that which is got by violence. (5.) Those that had not advantage of doing wrong by their wealth, yet found means of defrauding those they dealt with. *The inhabitants thereof have spoken lies*; if they are not able to use force and violence, they use fraud and deceit: the inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth; they do not stick at a deliberate lie to make a good bargain. Some understand it of their speaking falsely concerning God, saying, *The Lord seeth not, he hath forsaken the earth*, Ezek. viii. 12.

(2.) They are charged with *idolatry*, ver. 6. *The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the work of the house of Ahab*; both these kings were wicked, and did evil in the sight of the Lord: but the wickedness which they established by a law, concerning which they made statutes, and which was the peculiar work of that house, was idolatry. Omri walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin of provoking God to anger with their vanities, 1 Kings xvi. 26. and ver. 31. Ahab introduced the worship of Baal. These reigns were some ages before the time when this prophet lived, and yet the wickedness which they established by their laws and examples remained to this day; those statutes were still kept, and that work was still done; and the princes and people still walked in their counsels, took the same measures and governed themselves and the people by the same politics. Observe, (1.) The same wickedness continued from one generation to another. Sin is a root of bitterness soon planted, but not so soon plucked up again. The iniquity of former ages is often transmitted to and entailed upon the succeeding ones. Those that make corrupt laws and bring in corrupt usages, are doing that which perhaps may prove the ruin of the child unborn. (2.) It was nevertheless evil in itself, provoking to God, and dangerous to the sinners, for its having been established and confirmed by the laws of princes, the examples of great men, and a long prescription. Though the worship of idols is enacted by the statute of Omri, recommended by the practice of the house of Ahab, and pleads that it has been the usage of many generations, yet it is still displeasing to God and destructive to Israel; for no laws or customs are of force against the divine command.

3. What is the judgment given upon this. Being found guilty of these crimes, the sentence is, that which God had given them warning of, ver. 9. shall be brought upon them, ver. 13. *Therefore, also will I make thee sick, in smiling thee*; As they had smitten the poor with the rod of their oppressions, so would God in like manner smite them, so as to make them sick, sick of the gains they had unjustly gotten, so that though they had swallowed down riches, they should vomit them up again, Job xx. 15. Their doom is,

1. That what they have, they shall not have any comfortable enjoyment of, it shall do them no good; they grasped at more than enough, but when they have it, it shall not be enough to make them easy and happy; what is got by fraud and oppression cannot be kept or enjoyed with any satisfaction. (1.) Their food shall not nourish them, *Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied*; either because the food shall not digest, for want of God's blessing going along with it; or because the appetite shall by disease be made insatiable and still craving, the just punishment of those that were greedy of gain, and enlarged their desire as hell. Men may be surfeited with the good things of this world, and yet not satisfied, Eccl. v. 10. Isa. lv. 2. (2.) Their country shall not harbour and protect them; *thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee*; i. e. thou shalt be broken and ruined by intestine troubles, mischiefs at home enough to cast thee down, though thou shouldst not be invaded by a foreign force. God can cast a nation down by that which is in the midst of them, can consume them by a fire in their own bowels. (3.) They shall not be able to preserve what they have from a foreign force, nor to recover what they have lost. *Thou shalt take hold of what is about to be taken from thee, but thou shalt not hold it fast, shalt catch at it, but thou shalt not deliver it, shalt not retrieve it*; it is meant of their wives and children, that were very dear to them, which they took hold of, as resolved not to part with them, but there is no remedy, they must go into captivity. Note, What we hold closest we commonly lose soonest, and that proves least safe which is most dear. (4.) What they save for a time, shall be reserved for a future and forer stroke; *that which thou deliverest out of the hand of one enemy, will I give up to the sword of another enemy*, for God has many arrows in his quiver; if one misdeed the sinner, the next

shall not. (5.) What they have laboured for, they shall not enjoy, ver. 15. *Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap*; either it should be blighted and withered, and there shall be nothing to reap, or an enemy shall come and reap it for himself, or thou shalt be carried into captivity, and leave it to be reaped by thou knowest not whom: thou shalt tread the olive, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; having no heart to make use of ornaments and refreshments, when all is going to ruin. Thou shalt tread out the sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine, for many things may fall between the cup and the lip. Note, It is very grievous to be disappointed of our expectations, and not to have the pleasure of that which we have taken pains for; and this will be the just punishment of those that frustrate God's expectations from them, and answer not the cost he has been at upon them. See this threatened in the law, Lev. xxvii. 16. Deut. xxviii. 30—38, &c. and compare, Isa. lxii. 8. 9.

2. That all they have shall at length be taken from them, ver. 13. *Thou shalt be made desolate because of thy sins*; and ver. 16. *A desolation and a hissing*; Sin makes a nation desolate: and when a people that have been famous and flourishing, are made desolate, it is the astonishment of some, and the triumph of others: some lament it, and others hiss at it. *Thou shalt bear the reproach of my people*. Their being the people of God in name and profession, while they kept close to their duty, and kept themselves in his love, was an honour to them, and all their neighbours thought it so; but now they have corrupted and ruined themselves, now their sin and God's judgments have made their land desolate, their having been once the people of God, doth but turn so much the more to their reproach: their enemies will say, *these are the people of the Lord*, Ezek. xxxvi. 20. Note, If professors of religion ruin themselves, their ruin will be the most reproachful of any other: and they in a special manner will rise at the last day to everlasting shame and contempt.

## CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, (1.) The prophet in the name of the church sadly laments the woeful decay of religion in the age wherein he lived, and the deluge of impiety and immorality which overwhelmed the nation, which levelled the differences and bore down the fences of all that is just and sacred, ver. 1—6. (2.) The prophet for the sake of the church, prescribes comforts, which may be of use at such a time, and gives counsels what to do. (1.) They must have an eye to God, ver. 7. (2.) They must courageously bear up against the insolences of the enemy, ver. 8—10. (3.) They must patiently lie down under the rebukes of their God, ver. 9. (4.) They must expect no other, but that the trouble would continue long and must endeavour to make the best of it, ver. 11—13. (5.) They must encourage themselves with God's promises, in answer to the prophets prayers, ver. 14, 15. (6.) They must foresee the fall of their enemies, that now triumphed over them, ver. 16, 17. (7.) They must themselves triumph in the mercy and grace of God, and his faithfulness to his covenant, ver. 18—20. and with that comfortable word the prophecy concludes.

1. **W**OE is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first-ripe-fruit. 2. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. 3. ¶ That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrapt it up. 4. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge: the day of thy watchmen and the visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. 5. ¶ Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. 6. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

This is such a description of bad times, as some think could scarce agree to the times of Hezekiah, when this prophet prophesied; and therefore they rather take it as a prediction of what should be in the reign of Manasseh. But we may rather suppose it to be in the reign of Ahaz (and in that reign he prophesied, chap. i. 1.) or in the beginning of Hezekiah's time, before the reformation he was instrumental in; nay in the best of his days, and when he had done his best to purge out corruptions, still there was much amiss. The prophet cries out *Woe is me*; he bemoans himself that his lot was cast in such a degenerate age, and thinks it his great unhappiness, that he lived among a people that were ripening apace for a ruin which many a good man would unavoidably be involved in. Thus David cries out, *Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesek*. He laments it,

1. That there were so few good people to be found, even among those that were called God's people; and this was their reproach, spoken of chap. v. 6. *The good man is perished out of the earth, or out of the land*, the land of Canaan, it was a good land and land of uprightness, (Isa. xxvi. 10.) But there were few good men in it, none upright among them, ver. 2. The good man is a godly man, and a merciful man, the word signifies both. Those are completely good men, that are devout towards God, and compassionate and beneficent towards men; that love mercy and walk with God; These are perished; those few honest men that some time ago enriched and adorned our country are now dead and gone, and there are none risen up in their stead that tread in their steps; honesty is banished, and there is no such thing as a good man to be light on. Those that were of religious education are degenerated, and become as bad as the worst; the godly man ceaseth, Psalm xii. 1. This is illustrated by a comparison, ver. 1. *They were as when they have gathered the summer fruits*; it was as hard a thing to find a good man, as to find any of the summer fruits (which were the choicest and best, and therefore must carefully be gathered in) when the harvest is over. The prophet is ready to say as Elijah in his time, 1 Kings xix. 10. *I, even I only am left*. Good men that used to hang in clusters, are now as the grape gleanings of the vintage, here and there a berry, Isa. xvii. 6. you can find no societies of them as bunches of grapes, but those that are, are single persons, there is no cluster to eat; and the best and fullest grapes are those that grow in large clusters. Some thinks this speaks not only the fewness of good people, but those few which remained that went for good people were good for



for little : like the small withered grapes, the refuse that were left behind, not only by the gatherer but by the gleaner. When the prophet observed this universal degeneracy it made him desire the first-ripe fruit, i. e. he wished to see such worthy good men as were in the former ages, who were the ornaments of the primitive times ; and as far excelled the best of all the present age, as the first and full-ripe fruits do those of the latter growth that never come to maturity. When we read and hear of the wisdom and zeal, the strictness and conscientiousness, the devotion and charity of the professors of religion in former ages, and see the reverse of this in those of the present age, we cannot but sit down and wisth with a sigh, *O for primitive Christianity again!* Where is the plainness and integrity of those that went before us? Where are the Israelites indeed without guile? Our souls desire them, but in vain : The golden age is gone and past recall ; we must make the best of what is, for we are not likely to see such times as have been.

2. That there were so many wicked mischievous people among them ; not only none that did any good, but multitudes that did all the hurt they could. *They all lie in wait for blood, and hunt every man his brother.* To get wealth to themselves they care not what wrong, what hurt they do to their neighbours and nearest relations : They act as if mankind were in a state of war, and force were the only right. They are as *beasts of prey* to their neighbours, for *they all lie in wait for blood* as lions for their prey, they thirst after it, make nothing of taking away any man's life or livelihood to serve a turn for themselves ; and *lie in wait* for an opportunity to do it. Their neighbours are as *beasts of prey* to them, for they *hunt every man his brother with a net*, they persecute them as noxious creatures, fit to be taken and destroyed, though they are innocent, excellent ones. We say of him that is out-lawed, *Caput gerit lupinum*, he is to be hunted as a wolf. Or they hunt them as men do the game, to feast upon it ; they have a thousand cursed arts of ensnaring men to their ruin, so that they may but get by it. Thus *they do mischief with both hands earnestly* ; their hearts desire it, their heads contrive it, and then *both hands* are ready to put it in execution. Note, The more eager and intent men are upon any sinful pursuit, and the more pains they take in it, the more provoking it is.

3. That the magistrates, who by their office ought to have been the patrons and protectors of right, were the practicers and promoters of wrong ; that they may do evil with both hands earnestly, to excite and animate themselves in it, *the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward*, for a bribe, with which they will be hired to exert all their power for the supporting and carrying on of any wicked design with both hands ; *they do evil with both hands well*, so some read it ; They do ill with a great deal of art and dexterity, they praise themselves for doing it so well ; others thus, *to do evil they have both hands*, (they catch at an opportunity of doing mischief) *but to do good the prince and the judge ask for a reward* : If they do any good offices they are mercenary in them, and must be paid for them. The great man that has wealth and power to do good, he is not ashamed to utter his mischievous desire in conjunction with the prince and the judge, who are ready to support him and stand by him in it, *so they wrap it up*, they perplex the matter, involve it, and make it intricate (so some understand it) that they may lose equity in a mist, and so make the cause turn which way they please. It is ill with a people when their *princes and judges and great men* are in a confederacy to pervert justice : And it is a sad character that is given of them, *ver. 4. that the best of them is as a briar, and the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge*, i. e. it is a dangerous thing to have anything to do with them, he that toucheth them must be fenced with iron, 2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7. he shall be sure to be scratched, to have his clothes torn, and his eyes almost pulled out. And if this be the character of the best and most upright, what are the worst? And when things are come to this pass the day of the watchman comes, that is as it follows, *the day of thy visitation*, when God will reckon with thee for all this wickedness ; which is called the day of the watchmen, because their prophets whom God set as watchmen over them, had often warned them of that day : When all flesh have corrupted their way, even the best and the most upright, what can be expected but a day of visitation? A deluge of judgments as that which drowned the old world when the earth was filled with violence.

4. That there was no faith in man, people were grown so universally treacherous, that one knew not whom to repose any confidence in, *ver. 5. Those that have any sense of honour, or sparks of virtue remaining in them, have a mighty regard to the laws of friendship*, they would not discover what passed in private conversation, nor divulge secrets to the prejudice of a friend ; but those things are now made a jest of, you will not meet with a friend that you dare trust, whose word you dare take, or who will have any tenderness or concern for you ; so that wise men shall give it and take it for a rule, *Trust ye not in a friend*, for you will find him false, you can trust him no farther than you can see him ; and even him that passeth for an honest man you will find to be so only with good looking to. Nay, he that undertakes to be your guide, to lead you into any business which he professeth to understand better than you, yet you cannot put a confidence in him, for he will be sure to mislead you if he get any thing by it. Some by a guide understand a husband, who is called the guide of thy youth ; and that agrees well enough with what follows, *Keep the doors of thy lips from her that lieth in thy bosom*, from thy own wife, take heed what thou sayest before her lest she betray thee, as Delilah did Sampson ; lest she be the bird of the air that carries the voice of that which thou sayest in thy bed-chamber, Eccles. x. 6. It is an evil time indeed, when the prudent are obliged even thus far to keep silence.

5. That children were abusive to their parents, and men had no comfort, no satisfaction in their own families, and their nearest relations, *ver. 6. The times are bad indeed when the son dishonoureth his father*, gives him ill language, exposeth him, threatens him, and studies to do him a mischief, when the daughter riseth up in rebellion against her own mother, having no sense of duty, nor natural affection, and no marvel that then the daughter-in-law quarrels with her mother-in-law, and is vexatious to her : For they cannot agree about their property and interest, or their humours and passions clash ; or from a spirit of bigotry and persecution, the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child, Matt. x. 4. Luke xxi. 16. It is said when a man's betrayers and worst enemies are the men of his own house, his own children and servants that should be his guard and his best friends. Note, The contempt and violation of the laws of domestic duties are a sad symptom of an universal corruption of manners : Those are never likely to come to good that are undutiful to their parents, and study to be provoking to them and cross them.

7. Therefore I will look unto the LORD ; I will wait for the God of my salvation : my God will hear me. 8. ¶ Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy : When I fall, I shall arise ; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. 9. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against

him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me ; he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. 10. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her : now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. 11. In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. 12. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortresses even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. 13. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate, because of them that dwell therein for the fruit of their doings.

The prophet having sadly complained of the wickedness of the times he lived in, here falls upon some considerations for the comfort of himself and his friends, in reference thereunto. The case is bad but it is not desperate ; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

1. Though God be now displeased, he shall be reconciled to us, and then all will be well, *ver. 7—9.* We are now under the indignation of the Lord, God is angry with us, and justly, because we have sinned against him. Note, It is our sin against God, that provokes his indignation against us, and we must see it and own it, whenever we are under divine rebukes, that we may justify God, and may study to answer his end in afflicting us ; by repenting of sin and breaking off from it. Now, at such a time,

(1.) We must have recourse to God under our troubles, *ver. 7. Therefore I will look unto the Lord.* When a child of God has never so much occasion to cry, *Woe is me*, as the prophet here, *ver. 1.* yet it may be a comfort to him, that he has a God to look to, a God to come to, to fly to, in whom he may rejoice and have satisfaction. All may look bright above him, when all looks black and dark about him. The prophet had been complaining that there was no comfort to be had, no confidence to be put in friends and relations on earth, and this drives him to his God. *Therefore I will look unto the Lord.* The less reason we have to delight in any creature, the more reason we have to delight in God. If princes are not to be trusted, we may say, *happy is the man that has the God of Jacob for his help*, and happy am I, even in the midst of my present woes, if he be my help. If men be false, this is our comfort, that God is faithful ; if relations be unkind, he is and will be gracious. Let us therefore look above and beyond them, and overlook our disappointment in them, and look unto the Lord.

(2.) We must submit to the will of God in our troubles. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord*, will bear it patiently without murmuring and repining because I have sinned against him. Note, Those that are truly penitent for sin, will see a great deal of reason to be patient under affliction. *Wherefore should a man complain for the punishment of his sin?* When we complain to God of the badness of the times, we ought to complain against ourselves for the badness of our own hearts.

(3.) We must depend upon God to work deliverance for us, and put a good issue to our troubles in due time ; we must not only look to him, but look for him ; *I will wait for the God of my salvation*, and for his gracious returns to me. In our greatest distresses, we shall see no reason to despair of salvation, if by faith we eye God as the God of our salvation ; who is able to save the weakest upon their humble petition, and willing to save the worst upon their true repentance. And if we depend on God as the God of our salvation, we must wait for him, and for his salvation, in his own way and his own time. Let us now see what the church is here taught to expect and promise herself from God, even then when things are brought to the last extremity. (1.) *My God will hear me* ; if the Lord be our God, he will hear our prayers, and grant an answer of peace to them. (2.) *When I fall, and am in danger of being dashed in pieces by the fall, yet I shall arise, and recover myself again.* I fall but am not utterly cast down, Psalm xxxvii. 24. (3.) *When I sit in darkness*, desolate and disconsolate, melancholy and perplexed, and not knowing what to do or which way to look for relief, yet then the Lord shall be a light to me to comfort and revive me, to instruct and teach me, to direct and guide me, as a light to mine eyes, a light to my feet, a light in a dark place. (4.) *He will plead my cause, and execute judgment for me*, *ver. 9.* If we heartily espouse the cause of God, the just, but injured cause of religion and virtue, and make it our cause, we may hope he will own our cause and plead it. The church's cause, though it seem for a time to go against her, yet will at length be pleaded with jealousy, and judgment not only given against, but executed upon the enemies of it. (5.) *He will bring me forth to the light*, shall make me shine eminently out of obscurity, and become conspicuous ; shall make my righteousness shine evidently from under the dark cloud of clamour, Psalm xxxvii. 6. Isa. lviii. 10. The morning of comfort shall shine forth, out of the long and dark night of trouble. (6.) *I shall behold his righteousness*, i. e. I shall see the equity of his proceedings concerning me, and the performance of his promises to me.

2. Though enemies triumph and insult, they shall be silenced and put to shame, *ver. 8—10.* Observe here,

(1.) How proudly the enemies of God's people trample upon them in their distress ; they said, *Where is the Lord their God?* As if because they were afflicted God had forsaken them, and they knew not where to find him with their prayers, and he knew not how to help them with his favours. This David's enemies said to him, and it was a sword in his bones, Psalm xlii. 10. and see Psalm cxv. 2. Thus in reproaching Israel, as an abandoned people, they reflected on the God of Israel, as an unkind, unfaithful God.

(2.) How comfortably the people of God by faith bear up themselves under these insults, *ver. 8. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy ; I am now down but shall not be always so*, and when my God appears for me, then *she that is mine enemy shall see it and be ashamed*, not only being disappointed in her expectations of the church's utter ruin, but having the same cup of trembling put into her hand. Then mine eyes shall behold her in the same deplorable condition that I am now in. Now shall she be trodden down. Note, The deliverance of the church will be the confusion of her enemies ; and their shame shall be double, when as they have trampled upon God's people, so they shall themselves be trampled upon.

3. Though the land continue a great while desolate, yet it shall at length be replenished again ; when the time even the set time of its deliverance comes. (1.) Its salvation shall not come till after it has been desolate ; so the margin reads it, *ver. 13.* God has a controversy with the land, and it must lie long under his rebukes, because of them that dwell therein, it is their iniquity that makes their land desolate ; Psalm cvii. 34. it is for the fruit of their doings ; their evil doings which they have been themselves guilty of, and



and the evil fruit of them, the sins of others which they have been accessory to by their ill influence and example. For this they must expect to smart a great while, for the world shall know that God hates sin even in his own people. (2.) When it doth come it shall be a complete salvation; and it seems to refer to their deliverance out of Babylon by Cyrus, which Isaiah about this time prophesied of, as a type of our redemption by Christ. (1.) *The decree shall be far removed*; God's decree concerning their captivity, and Nebuchadnezzar's decree concerning the perpetuity of it, his resolution never to release them, these shall be set aside and revoked, and you shall hear no more of them; they shall no more lie as a yoke upon thy neck. (2.) Jerusalem and the cities of Judah shall be again reared; then *thy walls shall be built*; walls for habitation, walls for defence, house walls, town walls, temple walls: it is in order to these that the decree is repealed, *Ist. xlv. 28*. Though Zion's walls may lay long in ruins, there will come a day when they shall be repaired. (3.) All that belong to the land of Israel whithersoever *dispersed*, and howsoever *distressed*, far and wide over the face of the whole earth, shall come flocking to it again, *ver. 12*. *He shall come even to thee*, having liberty to return, and a heart to return from Assyria whither the ten tribes were carried away, though it lay remote; and *from the fortified cities*, and *from the fortresses*, those strong-holds in which they thought they had them fast: for when God's time is come, though Pharaoh will not let the people go, God will fetch them out with a high hand. They shall come from all the remote parts, *from sea to sea*, and *from mountain to mountain*, not turning back for fear of your discouragements, but they shall go from strength to strength till they come to Zion. Thus in the great day of redemption, *God will gather his elect from the four winds*.

14. ¶ Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. 15. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things. 16. ¶ The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. 17. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee. 18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. 19. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. 20. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

Here is, 1. The prophet's prayer to God to take care of his own people, and of their cause and interest, *ver. 14*. When God is about to deliver his people he stirs up their friends to pray for them, and pours out a spirit of grace and supplication, *Zech. xii. 10*. And when we see God coming towards us in ways of mercy, we must go forth to meet him by prayer. It is a prophetic prayer, which amounts to a promise of the good prayed for, for what God directed his prophet to ask, no doubt he designed to give. Now, (1.) The people of Israel are here called the flock of God's heritage, for they are the sheep of his hand, the sheep of his pasture, his little flock in the world; and they are his heritage, his portion in the world; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. (2.) This flock dwells solitarily in the wood or forest in the midst of Carmel, a high mountain; Israel was a peculiar people that dwelt alone, and was not reckoned among the nations, like a flock of sheep in a wood. They were now a desolate people, *ver. 13*. were in the land of their captivity as sheep in a forest, in danger of being lost and made a prey of to the beasts of the forest. They are scattered upon the mountains as sheep having no shepherd. (3.) He prays that God would feed them there with his rod, i. e. that he would take care of them in their captivity, would protect them, and provide for them, and do the part of a good shepherd to them. Let thy rod and staff comfort them, even in that darksome valley; and even there let them want nothing that is good for them. Let them be governed by thy rod, not the rod of their enemies, for they are thy people. (4.) He prays that God would in due time bring them back to feed in the plains of Bashan and Gilead, and no longer to be fed in the woods and mountains. Let them feed in their own country again, as in the days of old. Some apply this spiritually, and make it either the prophet's prayer to Christ, or his Father's charge to him to take care of his church as the great shepherd of the sheep, and to go in and out before them while they are here in this world as in a wood, that they may find pasture as in Carmel, as in Bashan and Gilead.

2. God's promise in answer to this prayer; and we may well take God's promises as real answers to the prayers of faith, and embrace them accordingly, for with him saying and doing are not two things. The prophet prayed that God would feed them, and do kind things for them, but God answers that he will shew them marvellous things, *ver. 15*. will do for them more than they are able to ask or think, will out-do their hopes and expectations: he will shew them his marvellous loving kindness, *Psal. xvii. 2*.

(1.) He will do that for them, which shall be the repetition of the wonders and miracles of former ages: according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt. Their deliverance out of Babylon shall be a work of wonder and grace, not inferior to their deliverance out of Egypt, nay, it should eclipse the lustre of that, *Jer. xvi. 14, 15*. much more should the work of redemption by Christ be so. Note, God's former favours to his church, are patterns of future favours, and shall again be copied out as there is occasion.

(2.) He will do that for them, which shall be matter of wonder and amazement to the present age, *ver. 16, 17*. The nations about shall take notice of it, and it shall be said among the heathen, *The Lord hath done great things for them*, *Psal. cxxvi. 3*. The impression which the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon shall make upon the neighbour nation, shall be very much for the honour both of God and his church. (1.) Those that had insulted over the people of God in their distress, and gloried that when they had them down they would keep them down, shall be confounded when they see them thus surprisingly rising up; they shall be confounded at all the might with which the captives shall now exert themselves, whom they thought for ever disabled. They shall now lay their hand upon their mouths as being ashamed of what they have said, and not able to say any more, by

way of triumph over Israel. Nay, their ears shall be deaf too, so much shall they be affirmed at the wonderful deliverance; they shall stop their ears, as being not willing to hear any more of God's wonders wrought for that people, which they had so despised and insulted over. (2.) Those that had impudently confronted God himself, shall now be struck with a fear of him; and thereby brought in profession at least, to submit to him, *ver. 17*. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall be so mortified, as if they were sentenced to the same curse the serpent was laid under, *Gen. iii. 14*. Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat. They shall be brought to the lowest abasement imaginable, and shall be so dispirited, that they shall tamely submit to them. His enemies shall lick the dust. *Psal. lxxii. 9*. Nay, they shall lick the dust of the church's feet, *Isa. xlix. 23*. Proud oppressors shall now be made sensible, how mean, how little they are before the great God, and they shall with trembling and the lowest submission move out of the holes into which they had crept, *Ist. ii. 21*. Like worms of the earth as they are, being ashamed and afraid to shew their heads; so low shall they be brought, and such objects shall they be when they are abused. When God did wonders for his church, many of the people of the land became Jews, because the fear of the Jews, and of their God, fell upon them, *Ezra. viii. 17*. So it is promised here, they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee, O Israel. Forced submissions are often but feigned submissions, yet they redound to the glory of God, and the church, though not to the benefit of the dissenters themselves.

3. The prophet's thankful acknowledgement of God's mercy in the name of the church, with a believing dependence upon his promise, *ver. 11—19, 20*. We are here taught.

1. To give to God the glory of his pardoning mercy, *ver. 18*. God having promised to bring back the captivity of his people, the prophet on that occasion admires pardoning mercy, as that which was at the bottom of it. As it was their sin that brought them into bondage, so it was God's pardoning their sin that brought them out of it. See *Psal. lxxxv. 1, 2*. and *Ist. xxxiii. 21—xxxviii. 17—xl. 1, 2*. The pardon of sin is the foundation of all other covenant mercies, *Heb. viii. 12*. This the prophet stands amazed at, while the nations about stood amazed only at those deliverances which were but the fruits of this. Note, (1.) God's people that are the remnant of his heritage, stand charged with many transgressions; being but a remnant, a very few, one would hope they should all be very good, but they are not so; God's children have their spots, and often offend their Father. (2.) The gracious God is ready to pass by and pardon the iniquity and transgression of his people, upon their repentance and return to him. God's people are pardoned people, and to this they owe their all. When God pardons sin he passeth it by, doth not punish it as justly he might, nor deal with the sinner according to the desert of it. (3.) Though God may for a time lay his own people under the tokens of his displeasure, yet he will not retain his anger for ever, but though he cause grief, he will have compassion; he is not implacable; yet against those that are not of the remnant of his heritage, that are unpardoned, he will keep his anger for ever. (4.) The reasons why God pardons sin and keeps not his anger for ever, are all taken from within himself; it is because he delighteth in mercy, and the salvation of sinners is what he has pleasure in, not their death and damnation. (5.) The glory of God in forgiving sin, is as in other things matchless and without compare. There is no God like unto him for this; no magistrate, no common person forgives as God doth. In this his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours; in this he is God and not man. (6.) All those that have experienced pardoning mercy cannot but admire that mercy; it is what we have reason to stand amazed at, if we know what it is. Has God forgiven us our transgressions? we may well say, who is a God like unto thee? Our holy wonder of pardoning mercy, will be a good evidence of our interest in it.

2. To take to ourselves the comfort of that mercy, and all that grace and truth that goes along with it. God's people here, as they look back with thankfulness upon God's pardoning their sins, so they look forward with assurance upon what he would yet farther do for them. His mercy endures for ever, and therefore as he has shewed mercy, so he will, *ver. 19, 20*. (1.) He will renew his favours to us, he will turn again, he will have compassion, i. e. he will again have compassion upon us, as formerly he had; his compassions shall be new every morning: he seemed to be departing from us in anger, but he will turn again and pity us. He will turn us to himself, and then will turn to us, and have mercy upon us. (2.) He will renew us, to prepare and qualify us for his favour. He will subdue our iniquities; when he takes away the guilt of sin that it may not damn us, he will break the power of sin that it may not have dominion over us; that we may not fear sin or be led captive by it. Sin is an enemy that fights against us, a tyrant that oppresseth us; nothing less than almighty grace can subdue it, so great is its power in fallen man, and so long has it kept possession: but if God forgive the sin that has been committed by us, he will subdue the sin that dwelleth in us, and in that, there is none like him in forgiving; and all those whose sins are pardoned, earnestly desire and hope to have their corruptions mortified and their iniquities subdued, and please themselves with the hopes of it: if we be left to ourselves, our iniquities will be too hard for us, but God's grace we trust shall be sufficient for us to subdue them, so that they shall not rule us, and then they shall not ruin us. (3.) He will confirm this good work, and effectually provide that his act of grace shall never be repealed: thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea; as when he brought them out of Egypt, (to which he has an eye in the promises here, *ver. 15*.) he subdued Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and cast them into the depth of the sea. It intimates, that when God forgives sin he remembers it no more, and takes care that it never be remembered more against the sinner, *Ezek. xviii. 22*. His transgressions shall not be mentioned unto him, they are blotted out as a cloud which never appears more. He casts them into the sea, not near the shore side where they may appear again next low water, but into the depths of the sea, never to rise again. All their sins shall be cast there without exception, for when God forgives sin he forgives all. (4.) He will perfect that which concerns us, and with this good work will do all that for us which our case requires, and which he has promised, *ver. 20*. Then wilt thou perform thy truth to Jacob, and thy mercy to Abraham. It is in pursuance of the covenant that our sins are pardoned, and our lusts mortified, from that spring all these streams flow, and with these he shall freely give us all things. The promise is said to be mercy to Abraham, because as made to him first it was mere mercy, preventing mercy, considering what state it found him in. But it was truth to Jacob, because the faithfulness of God was engaged to make good to him and his seed as heirs to Abraham, all that was graciously promised to Abraham. See here, (1.) With what solemnity the covenant of grace is ratified to us, it was not only spoken, written and sealed, but, which is the highest confirmation, it was sworn to our fathers; nor is it a modern project, but is confirmed by antiquity too, it was sworn from the days of old; it is an ancient charter. (2.) With what satisfaction it may be applied and relied upon by us; we may say with the highest assurance, Thou wilt perform the truth and mercy, not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground; faithful is he that has promised, who also will do it.



AN  
E X P O S I T I O N,  
WITH  
P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,  
Upon the Book of the PROPHET  
N A H U M.

The name of this prophet signifies a comforter, for it was a charge given to all the prophets, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people*; and even this prophet, though wholly taken up in foretelling the destruction of Nineveh, which speaks terror to the Assyrians, yet even in that is comforter to the ten tribes of Israel, who, it is probable, were now lately carried captives into Assyria. It is very uncertain at what time he lived and prophesied, but most probable that he lived in the time of Hezekiah, and prophesied against Nineveh, after the captivity of Israel by the king of Assyria, which was in the ninth year of Hezekiah, and before Sennacherib's invading Judah, which was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, for to that attempt and the defeat of it, it is supposed the first chapter hath reference, and, it is probable, was delivered a little before it, for the encouragement of God's people in that day of treading down and perplexity. And it is the conjecture of the learned Huetius, that the two other chapters of this book were delivered by Nahum some years after, perhaps in the reign of Manasseh, and in that reign the Jewish chronologies generally place him; somewhat nearer to the time when Nineveh was conquered, and the Assyrian monarchy reduced by Cyaxares and Nebuchadnezzar, some time before the first captivity of Judah. It is probable Nahum did by word of mouth prophesy many things concerning Israel and Judah, as it is certain Jonah did, 2 Kings xiv. 25. though we have nothing of either of them in writing but what related to Nineveh, which though a great and ancient city, yet probably we should never have heard of in sacred writ, if the Israel of God had not had some concern in it.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The inscription of the book, ver. 1. (2.) A magnificent display of the glory of God, in a mixture of wrath and justice against the wicked, and mercy and grace towards his people, and the discovery of his majesty and power in both, ver. 2—8. (3.) A particular application of this (as most interpreters think) to the destruction of Sennacherib and the Assyrian army, when they besieged Jerusalem, which was a very memorable and illustrious instance of the power both of God's justice, and of his mercy, and spoke abundance of terror to his enemies, and encouragement to his faithful servants, ver. 9—16.

**I. THE burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.**

This title directs us to consider,

1. The great city against which the word of the Lord is here delivered; is the burden of Nineveh. Not only a prophecy, and a weighty one, but a burdensome prophecy, a dead weight to Nineveh, a mill stone hanged about its neck. Nineveh was the place concerned, and the Assyrian monarchy, which that was the royal seat of. About an hundred years before this, Jonah had in God's name foretold the speedy overthrow of this great city, but then the Ninevites repented and were spared, and that decree did not bring forth; the Ninevites then saw clearly how much it was to their advantage to turn from their evil way, it was the saving of their city, and yet soon after they returned to it again; it became worse than ever, a bloody city, and full of lies and robbery, they repented of their repentance, returned with the dog to his vomit, and at length grew worse than ever they had been; then God sent them not this prophet, as Jonah, but this prophecy to read them their doom, which was now irreversibile. Note, The reprieve will not be continued, if the repentance be not continued in. If men turn from the good they began to do, they can expect no other but that God should turn from the favour he began to shew, Jer. xviii. 10.

2. The poor prophet by whom the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is the book of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite. The burden of Nineveh, was what the prophet plainly foresaw, for it was his vision, and what he left upon record: it is the book of the vision, that when he was gone, the event might be compared with the prediction, and confirm it. All the account we have of the prophet himself is, that he was an Elkoshite, of the town called Elkes or Elcos, which St. Jerome saith was in Galilee. Some observe, that the scripture ordinarily saith little of the prophets themselves, that our faith might not stand upon their authority, but upon that of the blessed Spirit by whom their prophecies were indited.

2. God is jealous and the LORD revengeth: the LORD revengeth and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. 3. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. 4. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. 5. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. 6. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. 7. The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble: and he knoweth them that

trust in him. 8. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

Nineveh knows not God, that God that contends with her, and therefore is here told what a God he is, and it is good for us all to mix faith with that which is here said concerning him, which speaks a great deal of terror to the wicked, and comfort to good people; for this glorious description of the Sovereign of the world, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a bright side towards Israel, and a dark side towards the Egyptians. Let each take their portion from it, let sinners read it and tremble, let saints read it in triumph. The wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against his enemies, his favour and mercy is here assured to his faithful loyal subjects, and his almighty power in both, making his wrath very terrible, and his favour very desirable.

1. He is a God of inflexible justice, a jealous God and will take vengeance on his enemies; let Nineveh know this, and tremble before him. Their idols are insignificant things, there is nothing formidable in them, but the God of Israel is greatly to be feared; for, (1.) He resents the affronts and indignations done him by those that deny his being or any of his perfections, that set up other gods in competition with him, that destroy his laws, arraign his proceedings, ridicule his word, or are abusive to his people. Let such know, that Jehovah, the only one living and true God is a jealous God, and a revenger: he is jealous for his own honour in the matters of his worship, and will not endure a rival: he is jealous for the comfort of his worshippers, jealous for his land, Joel ii. 18. and will not have that injured. He is a revenger, and he is furious; he hath fury, so the word is; not as man hath it, in whom it is an ungoverned passion, so he hath said, *Fury is not in me*, Isa. xxvii. 4. but he has it in such a way as becomes the righteous God, to put an edge upon his justice, and to make it appear more terrible to those who otherwise would stand in no awe of it. He is Lord of anger, so the Hebrew phrase is, for that which we read, *he is furious*: he hath anger, but he hath it at command, and under government; our anger is often lord over us, as theirs that have no rule over their own spirits, but God is always Lord of his anger, and weigheth a path to it, Psal. lxxviii. 50. (2.) He resolved to reckon with those that put those affronts upon him. We are told here, not only that he is a revenger, but that he will take vengeance, he hath said he will, he hath sworn it, Deut. xxxii. 40, 41. Whoever are his adversaries and enemies among men, he will make them feel his resentments; and though the sentence against his enemies is not executed speedily, yet he reserveth wrath for them, and reserveth them for it in the day of wrath. Against his own people that repent and humble themselves before him he keepeth not his anger for ever, but against his enemies he will for ever let out his anger. And, ver. 3. *He will not at all acquit the wicked that sin and stand to it and do not repent.* Those wickedly depart from their God, that depart and never return, Psal. xviii. 21. and these he will not acquit. Humble supplicants will find him gracious, but scornful beggars will not find him easy, or that the door of mercy will be opened to a loud but idle, Lord, Lord. This revelation of the wrath of God against his enemies, is applied to Nineveh, ver. 8. and should be applied by all those to themselves, who go on still in their trespasses; with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof. The army of the Chaldeans shall overrun the country of the Assyrians and lay it all waste: God's judgments, when they come with commission, are like a deluge to any people, which they cannot keep off or make head against. Darkness shall pursue his enemies, terror and trouble shall follow them whithersoever they go, shall pursue them to utter darkness: if they think to flee from the darkness that pursues them, they will but fall into that which is before them.

2. He is a God of irresistible power, and is able to deal with his enemies, he they never so many, never so mighty, never so hardy. He is great in power, ver. 3. and therefore it is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy. Now here,

(1.) The power of God is asserted and proved by divers instances of it in the kingdom of nature, where we always find its visible effects in the ordinary course of nature, and sometimes in the surprising alterations of that course. (1.) If we look up into the regions of the air, there we shall find proofs of his power, for he hath his ways in the whirlwind, and the storm;



way forever God goes, he carries a whirlwind and a storm along with him, for the terror of his enemies, *Psal. xlii. 9. &c.* And wherever there is a whirlwind and a storm God has the command of it, the controul of it, and his way through it, goes on his way in it, and serves his own purpose by it: he spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, and even stormy winds are his word. He has his way in the whirlwind, i. e. he goes on undisturbed, and the methods of his providence are to us unaccountable; as it is *Job. ix. 8. The clouds are the dust of his feet, i. e. he treads upon them, walks on them, raiseth them when he pleaseth, as a man with his foot raiseth a cloud of dust.* It is but by permission or usurpation that the devil is the prince of the power of the air, for that power is in God's hand. (2.) If we cast our eye upon the great deeps, there we see the sea is his, for he made it; for when he pleaseth, he rebuketh the waves, and maketh it dry, by drying up all the rivers with which it is continually supplied. He gave those proofs of his power when he divided the Red Sea at Jordan, and can do the same again whenever he pleaseth. (3.) If we look round us on this earth, we find proofs of his power, when either by the extreme heat and drought of summer, of the cold and frost of winter, *Bashan languisheth, and Carmel and the flower of Lebanon languisheth,* the choicest and strongest flower languisheth. His power is often seen in earthquakes which shake the mountains, *ver. 5.* melt the hills and melt them down, and level them with the plains. When he pleaseth the earth is burnt at his presence by the scorching heat of the sun, and he could burn it with fire from heaven, as he did Sodom, and at the end of time he will burn the world and all that dwell therein. The earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Thus great is the Lord, and of great power.

(2.) This is particularly applied to his anger. If God be an almighty God, we may from thence infer, *ver. 6. Who can stand before his indignation?* The Ninevites had once found God slow to anger, as he saith, *ver. 3.* and perhaps presumed upon the mercy they had then had experience of, and thought they might make bold with him; but they will find he is just and jealous, as well as merciful and gracious, and having shewed the justice of his wrath, in the next he shews the power of it, and the utter insufficiency of his enemies to contend with him. It is in vain for the stoutest and strongest of sinners to think to make their part good against the power of God's anger. (1.) See God here as a consuming fire, terrible and mighty. Here is his indignation against sin, and the fierceness of his anger, his fury poured out, not like water, but like fire, like the fire and brimstone rained on Sodom; *Psal. xi. 6.* Hell is the fierceness of God's anger, *Rev. xvi. 19.* God's anger is so fierce that it beats down all before it, the rocks are thrown down by him, that seemed unmoveable; rocks have sometimes been rent by the eruption of subterraneous fires, which is a faint resemblance of the fierceness of God's anger against sinners whose hearts are rocky, for none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. (2.) See sinners here as feeble before the fire, weak and impotent, and a very unequal match for the wrath of God. (1.) They are utterly unable to bear up against it, so as to resist it, and put by the strokes of it. *Who can stand before his indignation?* Not the proudest and most daring sinner; not the world of the ungodly, no, not the angels that sinned. (2.) They are utterly unable to bear up under it, so as to keep up their spirits, and preserve any enjoyment of themselves. *Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?* As it is irresistible, so it is intolerable. Some of the effects of God's displeasure in this world a man may bear up under, but the fierceness of his anger, when it fastens immediately upon the soul, who can bear it? Let us therefore fear before him, let us stand in awe and not sin.

3. He is a God of infinite mercy; and in the midst of all this wrath mercy is remembered. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, that go on still in their transgressions, but let not those that trust in God tremble before him. For, (1.) He is slow to anger, *ver. 3.* not easily provoked, but ready to shew mercy to those who have offended him, and to receive them into favour upon their repentance. (2.) When the tokens of his rage against the wicked are abroad, he takes care for the safety and comfort of his own people, *ver. 7. The Lord is good to those that are good, and to them he will be a strong hold in the day of trouble.* Note, The same almighty power that is exerted for the terror and destruction of the wicked, is engaged and shall be employed for the protection and satisfaction of his own people; he is able both to save and to destroy. In the day of public trouble, when God's judgments are in the earth laying all waste, he will be a place of defence to those, who by faith put themselves under his protection, those that trust in him in the way of their duty, that live a life of dependence upon him and devotedness to him, he knows them; he owns them for his, he takes cognizance of their case, knows what is best for them, and what course to take most effectually for their relief. They are perhaps obscure and little regarded in the world, but the Lord knows them, *Psal. i. 6.*

9. What do ye imagine against the LORD! he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. 10. For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. 11. There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD: a wicked counsellor. 12. Thus saith the LORD, Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through: though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. 13. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder. 14. And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image, and the molten image, I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. 15. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee, he is utterly cut off.

These verses seem to point at the destruction of the army of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, which may well be reckoned a part of the burden of Nineveh, the head city of the Assyrian empire; and a pledge of the destruction of Nineveh itself about an hundred years after: and this was an event which Isaiah with whom probably this prophet was contemporary, spoke much of. Now observe here,

1. The great provocation which the Assyrians gave to God, the just and jealous God, for which, though slow to anger, he would take vengeance,

*ver. 11. There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord;* Sennacherib and his spokesman Rabshakeh; they framed an evil letter and an evil speech, not only against Hezekiah and his people, but against God himself; reflecting upon him as level with the gods of the heathen, and unable to protect his worshippers, dissuading his people from putting a confidence in him, and urging them rather to put themselves under the protection of the great king, the king of Assyria; they contrived to alter the property of Jerusalem, that it should be no longer the city of the Lord, the holy city. This one, this mighty one, so he thinks himself that comes out of Nineveh, imagining evil against the Lord, brings upon Nineveh this burden; never was the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth more daringly, more blasphemously affronted, than by Sennacherib at that time; he was a wicked counsellor, who counselled them to despair of God's protection, and surrender themselves to the king of Assyria, and endeavour to put them out of conceit with Hezekiah's reformation, *Isa. xxxvi. 7.* with this wicked counsellor, he here expostulates, *ver. 9. What do ye imagine against the Lord?* What a foolish wicked thing is it for you to plot against God, as if you could outwit divine wisdom, and overpower omnipotence itself. Note, There is a great deal imagined against the Lord by the gates of hell, and against the interests of his kingdom in the world; but it will prove a vain thing, *Psal. ii. 1, 2.* He that sits in heaven laughs at the imaginations of the pretenders to politics against him, and will turn their counsels headlong.

2. The great destruction which God would bring upon them for it; not presently upon the whole monarchy, the ruin of that was deferred till the measure of their iniquity was full. But, (1.) Upon the army, God will make an utter end of that; it shall be totally cut off and ruined at one blow; one fatal stroke of the destroying angel shall lay them dead upon the spot; affliction shall not rise up the second time, for it shall not need. With some sinners God makes a quick dispatch, doth their business at once; divine vengeance goes not by one certain rule, nor in one constant track; but one way or other by acute diseases or chronic ones, by slow deaths or lingering ones, he will make an utter end of all his enemies who persist in their imaginations against him. We have reason to think, that the Assyrian army were mostly of the same spirit and spoke the same language with their general, and now God would take them to task; though they did but say as they were taught: and it shall appear, that they have laid themselves open to divine wrath, by their own act and deed, *ver. 10. (1.) They are as thorns that intangle one another, and are folden together, they make one another worse, and more inveterate against God and his Israel, harden one another's hearts and strengthen one another's hands in their impiety; and therefore God will do with them, as the husbandman doth with a bush of thorns when he cannot part them, he puts them all into the fire together. (2.) They are as drunken men, intoxicated with pride and rage, and such as they shall be irrecoverably overthrown and destroyed. They shall be as drunkards, befuddled to their own ruin, and shall stumble and fall, and make themselves a reproach and be justly laughed at. (3.) They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry, which is irresistibly and irrecoverably consumed by the flame. The judgments of God are as devouring fire to those that make themselves as stubble to them. It is again threatened concerning this great army, *ver. 13.* that though they be quick and likewise many, very secure, not fearing the fallies out of the besieged upon them because they are numerous, yet thus shall they be cut down, or certainly shall they be cut down as grass and corn are cut down, with as little ado, when he shall pass through, even the destroying angel that is commissioned to cut them down. Note, The security of sinners, and their confidence in their own strength, is often a preface of ruin approaching. (2.) The destruction comes upon the king, he imagined evil against the Lord, and shall he escape! No, *ver. 14. The Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, the decree is gone forth, that thy name be no more sown, that thy memory perish, and that thou be no more talked of as thou hast been, and the report of thy mighty actions dispersed upon the wings of fame and celebrated with her trumpet.* Because Sennacherib's son reigned in his stead, some make this to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian empire not long after. Note, They that imagine evil against the Lord hasten evil upon themselves, and their own families and interests, and ruin their own names by dishonouring his name. It is farther threatened, (1.) That the images he worshipped should be cut off from their temple; the graven image and the molten image out of the house of his gods, which some think was fulfilled when Sennacherib was slain by his two sons: as he was worshipping in the house of Nisrock his god; by which barbarous parricide we may suppose the temple was looked upon as defiled, and was therefore disused, and the images cut off from it, the worshippers of those images no longer attending there. Or it may be taken more generally, to speak the utter ruin of Assyria; the army of the enemy shall lay all waste, and not spare even the images of their gods; by which God would intimate to them, that one of the grounds of his controversy with them is their idolatry. (2.) That Sennacherib's grave shall be made there, some think in the house of his god, there he was slain, and there he shall be buried, for he is vile; he lies under this perpetual mark of disgrace, that he had so far lost his interest in the natural affection of his own children that two of them murdered him. Or it may be meant of the ignominious fall of the Assyrian monarchy itself, upon the ruins of which that of Babylon was raised; what a noise was made about the grave of that once formidable state, but now despicable, is largely described, *Ezek. xxxi. 3—11—15, 16.* Note, Those that make themselves vile by scandalous sins, God will make them vile by shameful punishments.*

3. The great deliverance which God would hereby work for his own people, and the city that was called by his name. The ruin of the church's enemies is the salvation of the church, and a very great salvation it was that was wrought for Jerusalem by the overthrow of Sennacherib's army. (1.) The siege shall hereby be raised; now will I break his yoke from off thee, by which thou art kept in servitude, and will burst thy bonds in sunder by which thou seemest bound over to the Assyrian's wrath: that vast victorious army, when it forced free quarters for itself throughout all the land of Judah, and lived at discretion there, was as yokes and bonds upon them. Jerusalem when it was besieged, was as it were bound and fettered by it, but when the destroying angel had done his work, Jerusalem's bonds were burst asunder, and it was set at liberty again; this was a figure of the great salvation, by which the Jerusalem that is above, is made free, is made free indeed. (2.) The enemy shall be so weakened and dispirited that they shall never make any such attempt again, and the end of this trouble so well gained by the grace of God, that there shall be no more occasion for such a severe correction. (1.) God will not again afflict Jerusalem, his anger is turned away, and he saith, *It is enough; for he has by his might accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, Isa. x. 12.* and therefore, though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more; the bitter portion shall not be repeated, unless there be need, and the patient's case calls for it; for God doth not afflict willingly. (2.) The enemy shall not dare again to attack Jerusalem, *ver. 15. The wicked shall no more pass through thee as they have done, to lay all waste, for he is utterly cut off,* and disabled to do it. His army is cut off, his spirit cut off, and at length he himself is cut off.



Lastly, The tidings of the great deliverance shall be published and welcomed with abundance of joy throughout the kingdom, *ver. 15.* while Sennacherib prevailed and carried all before him, every day brought ill news: but now, *behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, the feet of the evangelist*; he is seen coming at a distance upon the mountains, as fast as his feet will carry him, and how pleasant a sight is it once more to see a messenger of peace, after we have received so many of Job's messengers? We find these words made use of by another prophet, to illustrate the mercy of the deliverance of the people of God out of Babylon, *Isa. lii. 7.* not that the prophets stole the word one from another, (as those did, *Jer. xxiii. 30.*) but speaking by the same Spirit, they often used the same expressions: and it may be of good use for ministers to testify their consent to *wholesome truths*, (*1 Tim. vi. 3.*) by concurring in the *same forms of sound words*, *2 Tim. i. 13.* These words are also quoted by the apostle, both from Isaiah and Nahum, and applied to the great redemption wrought out for us by our Lord Jesus, and the publishing of it to the world by the everlasting gospel, *Rom. x. 15.* Christ's messengers are those messengers of good tidings, that preach peace by Jesus Christ: how beautiful are the feet of those messengers? how welcome their message, to those that see their misery and danger by reason of sin? And observe, he that brings these good tidings, brings with them a call to Judah to keep her solemn feasts and perform her vows. During the trouble, (*1.*) The ordinary feasts had been intermitted, *Inter arma silent leges*: while Jerusalem was compassed with armies they could not go thither to worship, but now the embargo is taken off they must return to the observation of their feasts; and the feasts of the Lord will then be doubly sweet to the people of God, when they have been for some time deprived of the benefit of them, and God graciously restores them their opportunities again: for we are taught the worth of such mercies by the want of them. (*2.*) They had made vows to God, that if he would deliver them out of this distress, they would do something extraordinary in his service to his honour, and now the deliverance is wrought, they are called upon to perform their vows; the promise they had then made must now be made good, for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay. And those words, *The wicked shall no more pass through thee*, may be taken as a promise of the perfecting the good work of reformation, which Ezekiah had begun: the wicked shall not, as they have done, walk on every side, but they shall be cut off. And then the baffling of the attempts from the wicked enemies abroad, is a mercy indeed to a nation, when it is accompanied with the restraint and reformation of the wicked at home, that are its more dangerous enemies.

## CHAP. II.

We now come closer to Nineveh that great city; she took not warning by the destruction of her armies, and the fall of her king, and therefore may expect, since she persists in her enmity to God, that he will proceed in his controversy with her. Here is foretold, (*1.*) The approach of the enemy that should destroy Nineveh, and the terror of his military preparations, *ver. 1—5.* (*2.*) The taking the city, *ver. 6.* (*3.*) The captivity of the queen, the flight of the inhabitants, the seizing of all the wealth of it, and the mighty conformation it should be in, *ver. 7—10.* (*4.*) All this is run up to its true causes, their sinning against God, and God's appearing against them, *ver. 11—13.* All this was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar in the first year of his reign, in conjunction with Cyaxares, or Ashurbanipal king of the Medes, conquered Nineveh, and made himself master of the Assyrian monarchy.

**I.** HE that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. 2. For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine-branches. 3. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir-trees shall be terribly shaken. 4. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. 5. He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk: they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared. 6. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved. 7. And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts. 8. But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back. 9. Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store, and glory out of all the pleasant furniture. 10. She is empty and void, and waste, and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

Here is, 1. An alarm of war sent to Nineveh, *ver. 1.* The prophet speaks of it as just at hand, for it is neither doubtful, nor far distant; look about thee and see, *He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face*; Nebuchadnezzar that is noted, and will be yet more so, for *dasheth nations in pieces*, begins with thee, and will dissipate and disperse thee; so some render the word: Babylon is called the hammer of the whole earth, *Jer. 1. 23.* The attempt of Nebuchadnezzar upon Nineveh is public, bold and daring he is come up before thy face, avowing his design to ruin thee. And therefore stand to thine arms, O Nineveh; keep the munition, secure thy towers and magazines, watch the way, set guards upon all the avenues to the city, make thy loins strong, encourage thy soldiers, animate thyself and them, fortify thy power mightily, as cities used to do when an enemy is advancing against them; this is spoken ironically, do the utmost thou canst, yet thou shalt not be able to put by the stroke of this judgment, for there is no counsel or strength against the Lord.

2. A manifesto published shewing the causes of the war, *ver. 2.* The Lord has turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel, i. e. 1.

The Assyrians have been abusive to Jacob, the two tribes have humbled and mortified them, as well as to Israel, the ten tribes have emptied them, and marred their vine branches, and for this God will reckon with them, though done long since; it shall come into the account now against that kingdom, and Nineveh the head city of it; God's quarrel with them is for the violence done to Jacob. Or, 2. God is now by Nebuchadnezzar about to turn away the pride of Jacob, by the captivity of the two tribes, as he did the pride of Israel, by their captivity; he has done it, he has determined to do it, to bring emptiers upon them, and the enemy that is to do it must begin with Nineveh, and reduce that first, and humble the pride of that God is looking upon proud cities and abasing them, even those that were nearest to him; Samaria is humbled, and Jerusalem is to be humbled, and their pride brought low, and shall not Nineveh that proud city be brought down too? Emptiers have emptied the cities, and marred the vine branches in the country of Jacob and Israel, and must not the excellency of Nineveh, that is so much her pride be turned away too?

3. A particular given in of the terrors wherein the invading enemy shall appear against Nineveh, every thing shall contribute to make him formidable. (*1.*) The shields of his mighty men are made red, and probably their other arms and array; as if they were already tinged with the blood they had shed, or intended hereby to signify they would put all to the sword; they hung out a red flag in token that they would give no quarter. (*2.*) The valiant men are in scarlet: not only red clothes to intimate what bloody work they designed to make, but rich clothes to intimate the wealth of the army, and that is the sinews of war. (*3.*) The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, when they are making their approaches they shall fly as swift as lightning, the wheels shall strike fire upon the stones, and those that drive them shall drive furiously with a flaming indignation, as Jehu drove. Or they carried flaming torches with them in the open chariots, when they made their approach in the night, as Gideon's soldiers carried lamps in their pitchers both to be a guide to themselves and a terror to their enemies, and with them to set all on fire wherever they went. (*4.*) The fir trees shall be terribly shaken, the great men of Nineveh that overtop their neighbours, as the stately firs do the shrubs; or the very standing trees shall be made to shake by the violent convulsions of the earth which that great army shall cause. (*5.*) The chariots of war shall be very terrible, *ver. 4.* They shall rage in the streets, i. e. those that drive them shall rage, you shall think the chariots themselves raged; they shall be so numerous, and drive with so much fury, that even in the broad ways, where one would think there should be room enough, they shall jostle one another; and these iron chariots shall be made so bright, that in the beams of the sun they shall seem like torches in the night, they shall run like the lightnings, so swiftly, so furiously. Nebuchadnezzar's commanders are here called his worthies, his gallants, so the margin reads it, his heroes, those he shall recount, and order them immediately and without fail to render themselves at their respective posts, for he is entering upon action, is resolved to take the field presently, and to open the campaign with the siege of Nineveh. His worthies shall remember, so some read it, they shall be mindful of the duty of their place, and the charge they have received; and shall thereby be made so intent upon their business, that they shall stumble in their walks, shall make more haste than good speed; they shall stumble but shall not fall; for they shall make haste to the wall thereof, shall open the trenches, and the defence or the covered way shall be prepared, something to shelter them from the darts of the besieged; and they shall so closely carry on the siege and with so much vigour, that at length the gates of the rivers shall be opened, *ver. 6.* i. e. those gates of Nineveh which open upon the river Tigris (on which Nineveh was built) shall be first forced by, or betrayed to the enemy, and by those gates they shall enter. And then the palace shall be dissolved, either the king's house, or the house of Nisroch his god; the same word signifies both a palace and a temple. When the God of heaven goes forth to contend with a people, neither the palaces nor their kings, neither the temples nor their gods can protect and shelter them, but must all inevitably fall with them.

4. A prediction of the consequences of this: and it is easy to guess how dismal those will be. (*1.*) The queen shall fall into the hands of the enemy, *ver. 7.* Huzzab shall be led away captive, she that was established (so some read it) thought herself safe, because she was concealed and shut up in secret, shall be discovered, so the margin reads it, and shall be led away captive in greater disgrace than that of common prisoners; she shall be brought up in a mock-state, and her maids of honour shall lead her, because she is weak and fainty, not able to bear such frights and hardships, which are double hard and frightful to those that have not been used to them; they shall attend her, not to speak cheerfully to her and to encourage her, but murmuring and moaning themselves, as with the voice of doves, the doves of the valleys, *Ezek. vii. 16.* noted for their mourning, *Isa. xxxviii. 14—liv. 11.* They shall be tabering upon their breasts, beating their own breasts in grief and vexation, as if they were drumming upon them, for so the word signifies. (*2.*) The inhabitants, though numerous, shall none of them be able to make head against the invaders or stand their ground, *ver. 8.* Nineveh is of old like a pool of water, replenished with people as a pool with water, (and waters signify multitudes, *Rev. xvii. 15.*) or as those waters with fish, it was long ago a populous city, in Jonah's time there were an hundred and twenty thousand little children in it, *Jonah iv. 6.* and ordinarily cities and countries are increasing in their number every year; but though they have so many hands to be employed in the public service, yet they shall not be able to inspire one another with courage, but they shall flee away like cowards. Their commanders shall do what they can to animate them, they shall cry, stand, stand, have a good heart on it, and we shall do well enough; but none shall so much as look back, they shall not have the least spark of courage remaining, but every one shall think it his wisest course to make their best of the opportunity to escape; they shall not so much as look back to see who calls for them. Note, God can dispirit the strongest and boldest in the day of distress, so that they shall not be what one would expect from them, but like a pool of water, the water whereof is dried up and gone. (*3.*) The wealth of the city shall become a prey, and all its rich furniture shall fall into the hands of the victorious enemy, *ver. 9.* they shall thus animate and excite one another to plunder. Take the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; thus officers must stir up the soldiers to improve their opportunity; here is silver and gold enough for them, for there is no end of the store of money and plate. Nineveh having been of old like a pool of water, has gathered a vast deal of mud; and abundance of glory it has out of all the pleasant furniture, all the vessels of desire, which they have gloried in, and which shall now be a prey and a pride to the conquerors. Note, Those who prepare raiment as the clay, and heap up silver as the dust, know not who may put on the raiment, and divide the silver, *Job. xxvii. 16, 17.* Thus this rich city is empty, and void, and waste, *ver. 10.* See the vanity of worldly wealth, instead of defending its owners, it does but expose them, and enable their enemies to do them so much the more mischief. (*4.*) The soldiers and people shall have no heart to appear for the defence of the city. Their spirits shall melt away like wax before the fire, their knees shall smite together, as Belshazzar's did in his agony, *Dan. v. 6.* so that they shall not be able to stand their ground, no, nor make their



their escape; much pain shall be in all loins, as useth to be in extreme frights, so that they shall not be able to hold up their backs. And the faces of them all shall gather blackness, like that of a pot that is every day over the fire, so the word signifies. Note, Guilt in the conscience will fill men with terror in an evil day, and those who place their happiness in the wealth of this world, and set their hearts upon it, think themselves undone when their silver and their gold and their pleasant furniture are taken from them.

11. Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions? where the lion even the old lion walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid. 12. The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin. 13. Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions, and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

Here we have Nineveh's ruin,

1. Triumphed in by its neighbours, who now remember against it, all the oppressions and abuse of power it had been guilty of in its pomp and prosperity, ver. 11, 12. *Where is the dwelling of the lions?* It is gone, there appear no remnants, no footsteps of it; *Where is the feeding place of the young lions,* where they glutted themselves with prey? The princes of Nineveh had been as lions, as beasts of prey; cruel tyrants are no better nay, in this respect much worse, that being men, humanity is expected from them; nay, if they were indeed lions, they would not prey upon those of their own kind, *sevis inter se convenit urbis*, but in the shape of men they have the cruelty of lions; they walked in Nineveh as lions in the woods, and none made them afraid, every one stood in awe of them, and they were under no apprehensions of danger from any: though no body loved them, every body feared them, and that was all they desired, *oderint dum metuant*; the king himself and every prince made it his business, by all the arts of violence and extortion, to enrich himself and raise his family; he did tear in pieces enough for his whelps (and no little would be enough for them) and he strangled for his lionesses, killed all that came near him, and seized what they had for his children, for his wives and concubines, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin, as lions used to do. Note, Many make it an excuse for their rapine and injustice, that they have wives and children to provide for, whereas what is so got will never do them any good; they that fear the Lord, and get what they have honestly, shall not want a competency for themselves and theirs, *verily they shall be fed*; when the young lions, though dens and holes were filled with prey and rapine for them, shall lack and suffer hunger, Psal. xxxiv. 10.

2. It is avowed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, it is his doings, and let all the world take notice that it is so, ver. 13. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts. And what good can holis do for her in her defence, when the Lord of hosts is against her for her destruction. The oppressors in Nineveh thought they only set their neighbours against them, who were not a match for them, and whom they could easily overpower; but it proved they set God against them, who is, and will be the avenger of right and the avenger of wrong. God is against the princes of Nineveh and then, (1.) These military preparations will stand them in no stead. I will burn her chariots in the smoke, he doth not say in the fire, but in contempt of them, the very smoke of God's indignation shall serve to burn their chariots; they shall be consumed as the fire of his indignation is kindled, while as yet it doth but smoke and not flame out. Or the drivers of the chariots shall be smothered and stifled with the smoke; then the chariots of their glory shall be the shame of their families, *Ist. xxii. 18.* (2.) Their children, the hopes of their families, shall be cut off; the sword shall devour the young lions whom they were so solicitous to provide for by oppression and extortion. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of their children, or (which is all one) of comfort in them, that take sinful courses to enrich them, (and as has been said of some) damn their souls to make their sons gentlemen. (3.) The wealth they have heaped up by fraud and violence, shall neither be enjoyed by them, nor employed for them. I will cut off thy prey from the earth, not only thou shalt not be the better for it, no one else shall. Some understand it of the disabling of them for the future to prey upon their neighbours. (4.) Their agents abroad shall not have that respect from their neighbours, and that influence upon them, which sometimes they had had. The voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard no more be heeded. Which some think refers to Rabshakeh, one of Nineveh's messengers, that had blasphemed the living God, an iniquity which was remembered against Nineveh long after. Those are not worthy to be heard again, that have once spoken reproachfully of God.

### C H A P. III.

This chapter goes on with the burden of Nineveh, and concludes it. (1.) The sins of that great city are charged upon it, murder, ver. 1. whoredom and witchcraft, ver. 4. and a general extent of wickedness, ver. 19. (2.) Judgments are here threatened against it, blood for blood, ver. 2, 3, and shame for shameful sins, ver. 5, 6, 7. (3.) Instances are given of the like desolations brought upon other places for the like sins, ver. 8-11. (4.) The overthrow of all those things which they depend upon and put confidence in, is foretold, ver. 12-19.

1. **W**OE to the bloody city, it is all full of lies and robbery, the prey departed not. 2. The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. 3. The horsemen lifted up both the bright sword, and the glittering spear, and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses: they stumbled upon their corpses: 4. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. 5. Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts,

and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. 6. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock. 7. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee, shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste, who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

Here is, 1. Nineveh arraigned and indicted; it is a high charge that is here drawn up against that great city, and neither her number nor her grandeur shall secure her from prosecution. (1.) It is a city of blood, i. e. in which a great deal of innocent blood is shed, which the righteous God will make inquisition for: either by unrighteous war, or under colour and pretence of public justice, or by suffering barbarous murders to go unpunished. (2.) It is all full of lies, truth is banished from among them, there is no such thing as honesty, one knows not whom to believe, nor whom to trust. (3.) It is all full of robbery and rapine, no man cares what mischief he doth, nor to whom he doth it; *The prey departeth not*, i. e. they never know when they have got enough by spoil and oppression. They shed blood and told lies in pursuit of the prey, that they might enrich themselves. (4.) There is a multitude of whoredoms in it, i. e. idolatries, spiritual whoredoms, by which she defiled herself and to which she seduced the neighbour nations as a well-favoured harlot, and sold and ruined nations through her whoredoms. (5.) She is a mistress of witchcrafts, and by them she sells families, ver. 4. That which Nineveh aimed at, was an universal monarchy, to be the metropolis of the world, and to have all her neighbours under her feet; to compass this, she used not only arms but arts, compelling some, but deluding others into subjection to her, and wheedling them as a harlot by her charms, to lay their necks under her yoke, suggesting to them that it would be for their advantage; she courted them to join with her in her idolatrous right, to tie them the faster to her interests; and made use of her wealth, power and greatness, to draw people into alliances with her, by which she gained advantages over them and made a hand of them. These were her whoredoms, like those of Tyre, *Ist. xxiii. 15-17*. These were her witchcrafts, with which she unaccountably gained dominion. And for this, that God has a quarrel with her, who having made of one blood all nations of men, never designed one to be a nation of tyrants, and another of slaves, and who claims it as his own prerogative to be universal monarch.

2. Nineveh condemned to ruin upon this indictment. Woe to this bloody city, ver. 1. See what this woe is,

1. Nineveh had with her cruelties been a terror and destruction to others, and therefore destruction and terror shall be brought upon her: Those that are for overthrowing all that come in their way, will sooner or later meet with their match. (1.) Hear the alarm with which Nineveh shall be terrified, ver. 2. It is a formidable army that advanceth against it, you may hear them at a distance, the noise of the whip, driving the chariot-horses with fury, hear the noise of the rattling of the wheels, the prancing of horses and jumping chariots, the very noise is frightful, but much more so when they know that all this force is coming with all this speed against them, and they are not able to make head against it. (2.) See the slaughter with which Nineveh shall be laid waste, ver. 3. the sword drawn, with which execution shall be done, the bright sword lifted up, and the glittering spear, the dazzling brightness of which is very terrible to those whom they are lifted up against; see what havoc these make, when they are commissioned to slay, there is a great number of carcases, for the slain of the land shall be many, there is no end of their corpses, there is such a multitude of slain that it is in vain to go about to take the number of them, they lie so thick that passengers are ready to stumble upon their corpses, at every step; the destruction of Sennacherib's army, which in the morning were all dead corpses, is perhaps looked upon here as a figure of the like destruction that should afterwards be in Nineveh; for they that will not take warning by judgments at a distance, shall have them come nearer.

2. Nineveh had with her whoredoms and witchcrafts drawn others to shameful wickedness, and therefore God will load her with shame and contempt, ver. 5, 6, 7. The Lord of hosts is against her, and then she shall be exposed to the highest degree of disgrace and ignominy, shall not only lose all her charms, but shall be made to appear very odious. When it shall be seen, that while she courted her neighbours, it was with design to ruin their liberty and property; when all her wicked artifices shall be brought to light then her shame is discovered to the nations. When her proud pretensions are baffled, and her vain towering hopes of an absolute and universal dominion brought to nought, and she appears not to have been so strong and considerable as she would have been thought to be, then to see the nakedness of the land do they come and it appears ridiculous. Then do they cast abominable filth upon her, as upon a carted whore, and make her vile as the off-scouring of all things: that great city, which all the nations had made court to, and coveted an alliance with, is become a gazing-stock, a laughing-stock. They that when time was, looked upon her, and fled to her in hopes of protection from her, now look upon her, and flee from her, for fear of being ruined with her. Note, Those that abuse their honour and interest, will justly be disgraced and abandoned, and because miserable will be made contemptible, and thereby be made more miserable. When Nineveh is laid waste, who will bemoan her? Her trouble will be so great, and her sense of it so deep, as not to admit relief from sympathy, or any comforting considerations; or if it would, none shall do any such good office, whence shall I seek comforters for thee? Note, Those that shewed no pity in the day of their power can expect to find no pity in the day of their fall. When those about Nineveh, that had been deceived by her wiles, came to be undeceived in her ruin, every one shall insult over her and none bemoan her. This was Nineveh's fate when she was made a spectacle or gazing-stock. The greater mens shew was in the day of their abused prosperity, the greater will their shame be in the day of their deserved destruction. I will make thee an example, so Drusus reads it. Note, When proud sinners are humbled and brought down, it is designed that others should take example by them not to lift up themselves in security and insolence, when they prosper in the world.

8. Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? 9. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. 10. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. 11. Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou



thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy. 12. All thy strong holds *shall be like fig trees with the first-ripe figs*: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. 13. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee *are women*: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. 14. Draw the waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick-kiln. 15. There shall the fire devour thee: the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts. 16. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and flieth away. 17. Thy crowned *are* as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, *but* when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they *are*. 18. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell *in the dust*: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. 19. *There is* no healing of thy bruise: thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

Nineveh has been told that God is against her, and then none can be for her to stand her in any stead; yet she sets God himself at defiance, and his power and justice, and saith, *she shall have peace*. Threatened folks live long: therefore here the prophet largely shews how vain her confidences would prove, and insufficient to ward off the judgment of God.

To convince them of this,

1. He shews them that other places which had been as strong and as secure as they, yet could not keep their ground against the judgments of God. Nineveh shall fall unpitied and uncomforted (for miserable comforters will they prove, that speak peace to those on whom God will fasten trouble) and she shall not be able to help herself, for, *Art thou better than populous No?* ver. 8. He takes them off from their vain confidences by quoting precedents: The city alluded to is No, a great city in the land of Egypt, Jer. xli. 25. No-Ammon so some read it, both there and here. We read of it Ezek. xxx. 14, 15, 16. Some think it was Diospolis, others Alexandria: As God said to Jerusalem, Go, see what I did to Shiloh, Jer. vii. 12, so to Nineveh that great city, Go, see what I did to populous No. Note, It will help to keep up in us a holy fear of the judgments of God, to consider that we are not better than those that have fallen under those judgments before us: We deserve them *as much*, and are *as little* able to grapple with them. This also should help to reconcile us to afflictions; are we better than such and such that were in like manner exercised, nay, were not they better than us, and less likely to be so afflicted? Now concerning No, observe,

(1.) How firm her standing seemed to be, ver. 8. She was fortified both by nature and art, was *situate among the rivers*. Nile in several branches not only watered her fields but guarded her wall; her rampart was the sea, the lake of Marcotis, an Egyptian sea, like the sea of Tiberias; her wall was from the sea, it was fenced with a wall which was thought to make the place impregnable; it was also supported by its interests and alliances abroad, ver. 9. Ethiopia or Arabia were her strength, either by the wealth they brought to her in a way of trade, or by the auxiliary forces they furnished her with for military service; the whole country of Egypt also contributed to the strength of this populous city; so that it was *infinite*, and *there was no end of it*; so it might be rendered, she set no bounds to her ambition, and knew no end of her wealth and strength; people flocked to her endlessly, and she thought there never would be any end of it, but it is God's prerogative to be *infinite*. *Put and Lubim were thy helpers*, two neighbouring countries of Africa, Mauritania, and Libya, viz. Libya Cyrenica, a country that Egypt had much dependence upon. No, thus helped, seemed to sit as a queen, and was not likely to see any sorrow. But,

(2.) See how fatal her fall proved to be, ver. 10. *Yet was she carried away*, and her strength failed her: even she that was so strong, so secure, yet went into captivity. This refers to some destruction of that city which was then well known, and probably fresh in memory, though not recorded in history; for the destruction of it by Nebuchadnezzar (if we should understand this prophetically) could not be made an example to Nineveh; for the reducing of Nineveh was one of the first of his victories, and that of Egypt one of the last. The strength and grandeur of that great city could not be its protection from military execution: (1.) Not from that which was most barbarous; for her young children had no compassion shewn them, but were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets, by the merciless conquerors. (2.) Not from that which was most inglorious, and disgraceful; they cast lots for her honourable men that were made prisoners of war, who should have them for their slaves; so many had they of them, that they knew not what to do with them, but they made sport with throwing dice for them; all her great men that used to be adorned on state-days with chains of gold, were now bound in chains of iron; they were pinioned or hand-cuffed, so the word properly signifies, not only as slaves but as condemned malefactors. What a mortification was this to populous No, to have her honourable men and great men, that were her pride and confidence, thus abased! Now from hence he infers against Nineveh, ver. 11. Thou also shalt be intoxicated, infatuated, thou also shalt reel and stagger as drunk with the cup of the Lord's fury that shall be put into thy hand. See Jer. xxv. 17—27. thou shalt fall and rise no more. The cup shall go round and come to thy turn, O Nineveh, to drink off at last, and shall be to thee as the waters of jealousy.

2. He shews them that all those things which they reposed a confidence in should fail them.

1. Did the men of Nineveh trust to their own magnanimity and bravery? Their hearts should sink and fail them, *they shall be hid*, shall abscond for shame, being in disgrace, abscond for fear, being in distress and danger, and not able to face the enemies; *because of* whose strength and terror, having no strength of their own, they shall seek strength, shall come sneaking to

their neighbours to beg their assistance in a time of need. Thus God can cut off the spirit of princes, and take away their heart.

2. Did they depend upon their barrier, the garriisons and strong holds they had, which were regularly fortified and bravely manned? Those shall prove but paper-walls and like the first-ripe figs, which, if you give the tree but a little shake, will fall into the mouth of the eater that gapes for them; so easily will all thy strong-holds be made to surrender to the advancing enemy upon the first summons, ver. 11. Note, Strong-holds, even the strongest, are no fence against the judgments of God, when they come with commission. The rich man's wealth is his strong city and a high wall, but only in his own conceit, Prov. xviii. 10. They are supposed to make their strong-holds as strong as possible, and are challenged to do their utmost to make them tenable and serviceable to them against the invader, ver. 12. Draw the water for the siege, lay in great quantities of water that that which is so necessary to the support of human life may not be wanting; it is put here for all manner of provision with which Nineveh is ironically bid to furnish herself in expectation of a siege. Take never so much care that thou mayest not be starved out, and forced by famine to surrender, yet that shall not avail; fortify the strong-holds, by adding out-works to them, or putting men and arms into them, as with us by planting cannon upon them; Go into clay, and tread the mortar, and make strong the brick-kiln, take all the pains thou canst in erecting new fortifications; but it shall be all in vain, for, ver. 15. there shall even the fire devour thee if the strong-hold be burnt, or the sword cut thee off if it be taken by storm. It is by fire and sword that in time of war the great devastations are made.

3. Did they put a confidence in the multitude of their inhabitants, whom they reckoned their strongest walls and fortifications, their number, their valour? Alas! these shall stand them in no stead, they shall but sink the sooner under the weight of their own numbers, ver. 13. *Thy people in the midst of thee are women*; they have no conduct, no courage, they shall be fickle, feeble, and faint-hearted, as women commonly are in such times of danger and distress; they shall be at their wits end, adding to their griefs and fears by the power of their own imagination, and utterly unable to do any thing for themselves; the valiant men shall become cowards, O verè Phrygiæ, neque enim Phryges: though they make themselves many, (ver. 15.) as the canker-worm, and as the locusts that come in vast swarms, though thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven; though thy exchange be thronged with wealthy traders that having so much money to stand up in defence of, and so much to lay out in the means of their defence, one would think they should give the enemy a warm reception, yet their hearts shall fail them too: though they be numerous as caterpillars, yet the fire and sword shall eat them up easily and irresistibly as the canker-worm, ver. 15. They are as numerous as those wasting insects, but their enemies shall be mischievous like them. He adds, ver. 16. The canker-worm spoileth or spreadeth herself, and flieth away. Both the merchants and the enemies were compared to canker-worms. The enemies shall spoil Nineveh, and carry away the spoil without opposition, or any hope of recovering it. Or the rich merchants that have come from abroad to settle in Nineveh, and have raised vast estates there, out of which it was hoped they would contribute largely for the defence of the city, when they see the country invaded, and the city likely to be besieged, will send away their effects, and remove themselves to some other place; will spread their wings and fly away where they may be safe, and Nineveh shall be never the better for them. Note, It is rare to find, even those that have shared with us in our joys, willing to share with us in our griefs too. The canker-worms will continue upon the field while there is any thing to be had, but they are gone when all is gone. Those that men have got by, yet they do not care to lose by. Nineveh's merchants bid her farewell in her distress. Riches themselves are as the canker-worms, that on a sudden fly away as the eagle towards heaven, Prov. xxiii. 5.

4. Did they put a confidence in the strength of their gates and bars? What fence would those be against the force, against the judgments of God? ver. 13. The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies, the gates of thy rivers, chap. ii. 6. the flood-gates, or the palls and avenues, by which the enemy would make his entrance into the country; or the gates of the cities, these, though never so strong and well guarded, shall not answer their end, the fire shall devour thy bars, the bars of thy gates, and then they shall fly open.

5. Did they put a confidence in their king and princes? They should do them no service, ver. 17. Thy crowned are as the locusts; those that had pomp and power as crowned heads were enfeebled, and had no power to make resistance when the enemy came in like a flood. Thy captains that should lead thy forces into the field, are great indeed, and look great, but they are as the great grasshoppers, the maximum quod sic of that species, still they are but grasshoppers, worthless things that can do no service; They camp in the hedges in the cold day, the cold weather, but when the sun ariseth they flee away and are gone, no body knows whither. So these mercenary soldiers that lay slumbering about Nineveh, when any trouble ariseth, flee away, and shift for their own safety; the hireling flees, because he is a hireling. The king of Assyria is told, that it is a shame he needs to be told it, who might observe it himself, that his shepherds slumber; they have no life or spirit to appear for the flock, and are very remiss in the discharge of the duty of their place, and the trust reposed in them. Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust, and be buried in silence.

6. Did they hope that they should yet recover themselves and rally again? In this also they should be disappointed; for when the shepherds are smitten the sheep are scattered, the people is dispersed upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them, nor will they ever come together of themselves, but will wander endlessly as scattered sheep do. The judgments they are under is as a wound, and it is incurable; there is no relief for it, no healing of thy bruise, no possibility that the wound which is so grievous and painful to thee, should be so much as skinned over; thy case is desperate, ver. 19. and thy neighbours instead of lending a hand to help thee, shall clap their hands over thee, and triumph in thy fall; and the reason is, because thou hast been one way or other injurious to them all; upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually? Thou hast always been doing mischief to those about thee; there is none of them, but what thou hast abused and insulted, and therefore they shall be so far from pitying thee, that they shall be glad to see thee reckoned with. Note, Those that have been abusive to their neighbours, it will one time or other come against them; they are but preparing enemies to themselves, will clap their hands over them, and upbraid them with their former wickedness, for which they are now well enough served and paid in their own coin. The troublers shall be troubled, will be the burden of many, as it is here the burden of Nineveh.



AN  
EXPOSITION,  
WITH  
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,  
Upon the Book of the PROPHET  
**H A B A K K U K.**

It is a very foolish fancy of some of the Jewish Rabbins, that this prophet was the son of the Shunamite woman, that was at first miraculously given and afterwards raised to life by Elisha, 2 Kings iv. as they say also, the prophet Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath, which Elijah raised to life. It is a more probable conjecture of their modern chronologers, that he lived and prophesied in the reign of king Manasseh, when wickedness abounded, and destruction was hastening on; destruction by the Chaldeans, whom this prophet mentions as the instruments of God's judgments; and Manasseh was himself carried to Babylon, as an earnest of what should come afterwards. In the apocryphal story of Bel and the Dragon, mention is made of Habakkuk the prophet in the land of Judah, that was carried thence by an angel to Babylon, to feed Daniel in the den; those who give credit to that story take pains to reconcile our prophet's living before the captivity, and foretelling it with that; Huetius thinks that was another of the same name, a prophet, this of the tribe of Simeon; that of Levi; others, that he lived so long as to the end of the captivity, though he prophesied of it before it came. And some have imagined that Habakkuk's feeding Daniel in the den, is to be understood mystically, that Daniel then *lived by faith*, as Habakkuk had said *the just should do*; He was fed by that word, *Hab. ii. 4.* The prophecy of this book is a mixture of the prophet's addresses to God in the people's name, and to the people in God's name: for it is the office of the prophets to carry messages both ways. And we have in it a lively representation of the intercourse and communion that there is between a gracious God and a gracious soul. The whole particularly refers to the invasion of the land of Judah by the Chaldeans, which brought spoil upon the people of God, a just punishment of the spoil they had been guilty of among themselves: but it is of general use, especially to help us through that great temptation with which good men have in all ages been exercised, arising from the power and prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the righteous by it.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, (1.) The prophet complains to God of the violence done by the abuse of the sword of justice among his own people, and the hardships thereby put upon many good people, ver. 1—4. (2.) God by him foretells the punishment of that abuse of power by the sword of war, and the desolations which the army of the Chaldeans should make upon them, ver. 5—11. (3.) Then the prophet complains of that too, and is grieved that the Chaldeans prevail so far, ver. 12—17. So that he scarce knows which is more to be lamented, the sin or the punishment of it, for in both many harmless good people are very great sufferers: it is well there is a day of judgment, and a future state before us, in which it shall be eternally well with all the righteous, and with them only, and ill with all the wicked, and them only; so the present seeming disorders of providence shall be set to rights, and there will remain no matter of complaint whatsoever.

1. **T**HE burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. 2. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save me! 3. Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. 4. Therefore the law is slackened, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous: therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

No more is told us in the title of this book, which we have, ver. 1. but that the penman was a prophet, a man divinely inspired and commissioned, which is enough, if that be so, we need not ask concerning his tribe or family, or place of his birth; and that the book itself is the burden which he saw: for he was as sure of the truth of it, as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes already accomplished.

Here in these verses the prophet sadly laments the *iniquity of the times*, as one sensibly touched with grief for the lamentable decay of religion and righteousness. It is a very melancholy complaint which he here makes to God,

1. That no man could call what he had his own; but, in defiance of the most sacred laws of property and equity, he that had power on his side, had what he had a mind to, though he had no right on his side: the land was full of violence, as the old world was, Gen. vi. 11. The prophet cries out of violence, ver. 2. *Iniquity and grievance, spoil and violence.* In families and among relations, in neighbourhoods and among friends, in commerce and in courts of law, every thing was carried with a high hand, and no man made any scruple of doing wrong to his neighbour so that he could but make a good hand of it for himself. It does not appear that the prophet himself had any great wrong done him, in losing times it fared best with those that had nothing to lose; but it grieved him to see other people wronged, and he could not but mingle his tears with those of the oppressed. Note, Doing wrong to harmless people, as it is an iniquity in itself, so it is a great grievance to all that are concerned for God's Jerusalem, who sigh and cry for abominations of this kind. He complains, ver. 4. *that the wicked doth compass about the righteous*; one honest man, one honest cause, shall have enemies besetting it on every side, many wicked men in confederacy against it, do run it down; nay, one wicked man (for it is singular) with so many various acts of mischief, sets upon a righteous man that he perfectly deserts him.

2. That the kingdom was broken into parties and factions, that were continually biting and devouring one another. This is a lamentation to all the sons of peace, *there are that raise up strife and contention*, ver. 3. that foment divisions, widen breaches, incense men against one another, and

sow discord among brethren by doing the work of him that is the accuser of the brethren. Strifes and contentions that have been laid asleep, and begun to be forgotten, they awake, and industriously raise up again, and blow up the sparks that were hid under the embers. And if blessed be the peace-makers, cursed are such peace-breakers, that make parties and so make mischief that spreads farther and lasts longer than they can imagine. It is sad to see ill men warming their hands at those flames which are devouring all that is good in a nation, and stirring up the fire too.

3. That the torrent of violence and strife run so strong, as to bid defiance to the restraints and regulations of laws, and the administration of justice, ver. 4. Because God did not appear against them, no body else would, therefore the law is slackened, is silent, it breathes not, its pulse beats not (so it is said, the word signifies) it intermits, and judgment doth not go forth as it should; no cognisance is taken of those crimes, no justice done upon the criminals; nay, wrong judgment proceedeth, if appeals be made to the courts of equity the righteous shall be condemned, and the wicked justified, so that the remedy proves the worst disease. The legislative power takes no care to supply the deficiencies of the law, for the obviating of those growing, threatening mischiefs; the executive power takes no care to answer the good intentions of the laws that are made: the stream of justice is dried up by violence, and has not its free course.

4. That all this was open and public, and impudently avowed; it was barefaced. The prophet complains that this iniquity was shewed him, he beheld it which way soever he turned his eyes, nor could he look off it; *spoiling and violence are before me.* Note, The abounding of wickedness in a nation is a very great eye-sore to good people, and if they did not see it, they could not believe it to be so bad as it is. Solomon often complains of the vexation of this kind, which he saw under the sun; and the prophet would therefore gladly turn hermit, that he might not see it, Jer. ix. 2. But then must we needs go out of the world, which therefore we should long to do, that we may remove to that world where holiness and love reign eternally, and no spoiling and violence shall be before us.

5. That he complained of this to God, but could not obtain a redress of those grievances; Lord, saith he, why dost thou shew me iniquity? Why hast thou cast my lot in a time and place when and where it is to be seen, and why do I continue to sojourn in Mesceh and Kedar? I cry to thee of this violence, I cry aloud, I have cried long, but thou wilt not hear, thou wilt not save; thou dost not take vengeance on the oppressors, nor do justice to the oppressed, as if thine arm were shortened or thine ear heavy. When God seems to connive at the wickedness of the wicked, nay, and to countenance it, by suffering them to prosper in their wickedness, it shocks the faith of good men, and proves a sore temptation to them to say, they have cleansed their hearts in vain, Psal. lxxviii. 13. and hardens those in their impiety, who say, God hath forsaken the earth. We must not think it strange if wickedness be suffered to prevail far and prosper long; God has reasons, and we are sure they are good reasons, both for the reprieves of bad men, and the rebukes of good men; and therefore, though we plead with him, and humbly expostulate concerning his judgments, yet we must say he is wise and righteous and good in all; and must believe the day will come, though it may be long deferred, when the cry of sin will be heard against those that do wrong, and the cry of prayer for those that suffer it.

5. ¶ Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. 6. For lo, I raise up the Chaldeans that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs. 7. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. 8. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves; and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall



shall come from far, they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. 9. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east-wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. 10. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong-hold, for they shall heap dust and take it. 11. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.

We have here an answer to the prophet's complaint, giving him assurance that though God bore long, he would not bear always with this provoking people; for the day of vengeance was in his heart, and he must tell them so, that they might by repentance and reformation turn away the judgment they were threatened with.

1. The preamble to the sentence is very awful, *ver. 5. Behold, ye among the heathen, and regard.* Since they will not be brought to repentance by the long suffering of God, he will take another course with them. No repentments are so keen, so deep, as those of abused patience. The Lord will inflict upon them, (1.) A public punishment which shall be beheld and regarded among the heathen, which the neighbour-nations shall take notice of and stand amazed at, for *Deut. xxix. 21, 25.* This will aggravate the desolations of Israel, that they will thereby be made a spectacle to the world. (2.) An amazing punishment, so strange and surprising, and so much out of the common road of providence, that it shall not be paralleled among the heathen, shall be fiercer and heavier than what God has usually inflicted upon the nations that know him not: nay, it shall not be credited, even by those that had the prediction of it from God before it comes, or the report of it from those that were eye-witnesses of it when it is come; *you will not believe it, though it be told you*; it will be thought incredible, that so many judgments should combine in one, and every circumstance so strangely concur to enforce and aggravate it: that so great and potent a nation should be so reduced and broken; and that God should deal so severely with a people that had been taken into the bond of the covenant, and that he had done so much for. The punishment of God's professing people cannot but be the astonishment of all about them. (3.) A speedy punishment, *I will work a work in your days*; now quickly; this generation shall not pass, till the judgment threatened be accomplished. The sins of former days shall be reckoned for in your days; for now the measure of the iniquity is full, *Matt. xxiii. 36.* (4.) It shall be a punishment, in which much of the hand of God shall appear: it shall be a work of his own working, so that all who see it shall say, this is the Lord's doing; and it will be found a fearful thing to fall into his hands, woe to those whom he takes to task. (5.) It shall be such a punishment as will typify the destruction to be brought upon the despisers of Christ and his gospel, for to that these words are applied, *Acts xiii. 41. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.* The ruin of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans for their idolatry, was a figure of their ruin by the Romans, for rejecting Christ and his gospel, and it is a very marvellous thing, and almost incredible. *Is there not a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?*

2. The sentence itself is very dreadful and particular, *ver. 6. Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans.* There were those that raised up a great deal of strife and contention among them, which was their sin; and now God will raise up the Chaldeans against them, who shall strive and contend with them, which shall be their punishment. Note, When God's professing people quarrel among themselves, snarl at, and devour one another, it is just with God to bring the common enemy upon them, that shall make peace by making an universal devastation. The contending parties in Jerusalem were inveterate one against another, when the Romans came and took away their place and nation. The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of the destruction threatened, who though themselves acting unrighteously, yet shall execute the righteousness of the Lord, and punish the unrighteousness of Israel. Now here we have,

1. A description of the people that shall be raised up against Israel, to be a scourge to them. (1.) They are a bitter and hasty nation, cruel and fierce, and what they do is done with violence and fury; they are precipitate in their counsels, vehement in their passions, and push on with resolution in their enterprises; they shew no mercy, and they spare no pains. Miserable is the case of those that are given up into the hand of these cruel ones. (2.) They are strong, and therefore formidable, and such as there is no standing before, and yet no fleeing from, *ver. 7. They are terrible and dreadful,* famed for the gallant troops they bring into the field, *ver. 8. Their horses are swifter than leopards to charge and pursue, and more fierce than the evening wolves*; and wolves are observed to be the most ravenous towards the evening, after they have been kept hungry all day, waiting for that darkness, under the protection of which all the beasts of the forest creep forth, *Psal. civ. 10.* Their squadrons of horse shall be very numerous, *their horsemen shall spread themselves*, a great way, for they shall come from far, from all parts of their own country, and shall be dispersed into all parts of the country they invade, to plunder it and enrich themselves with the spoil of it. And in making speed to spoil, they shall hasten to the prey, as those, *Isa. viii. 1. margin,* for they shall fly as the eagle towards the earth when she hasteth to eat, and strikes at the prey she has an eye upon. (3.) Their own will is a law to them, and in the fierceness of their pursuits, they will not be governed by any laws of humanity, equity, or honour. Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves, *ver. 7. Appetite and passion rule them, and not reason or conscience*: their principle is, *Quicquid libet, licet, and sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas.* What favour can be hoped for from such an enemy? Note, Those that have been unjust and unmerciful, among whom the law is slackened, and judgment doth not go forth, will justly be paid in their own coin, and fall into the hands of those that will deal unjustly and unmercifully with them.

2. A prophecy of the terrible execution that should be made by this terrible nation. They shall march through the breadth of the earth, so it may be read, for in a little time the Chaldean forces subdued all the nations in those parts, so that they seemed to have conquered the world; they over-ran Asia and part of Africa. Or through the breadth of the land of Israel, which was wholly laid waste by them. It is here foretold, (1.) That they shall seize all as their own that they can lay their hands on. They shall come to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs, which they have no right to, but that which their sword gives them. (2.) That they shall push on the war with all possible vigour; They shall all come for violence, *ver. 9. not to determine any disputed right by the sword, but right or wrong, to enrich themselves with the spoil.* Their faces shall sup up as the east-wind; their very countenances shall be so fierce and frightful, that a look will serve to make them masters of all they have a mind to; so that they shall swallow up all, as the east-wind nips and blasts the buds and flowers. Their faces shall look towards the east, so some read it; they shall

still have an eye to their own country, which lay eastward from Judea, and all the spoil they seize they shall remit thither. (3.) That they shall take a vast number of prisoners, and send them into Babylon: They shall gather the captivity as the sand for multitude, and shall never know when they have enough, as long as there are any more to be had. (4.) That they shall make nothing of the opposition that is given to them, *ver. 10. Do the distressed Jews depend upon their great men to make a stand, and with their conduct and courage to give check to the victorious arms of the Chaldeans?* Alas, they will make nothing of them. They shall scoff (he shall, so it is in the original, meaning Nebuchadnezzar, who being pulled up with his successes shall scoff) at the kings and commanders of the forces that think to make head against him, and the princes shall be a scorn to them, so unequal a match shall they appear to be. Do they depend upon their garrisons and fortified towns? He shall deride every strong hold, for to him it shall be weak, and he shall heap dust and take it: a little soil thrown up for ramparts shall serve to give him all the advantage against them that he can desire; he shall make but a jest of them, and a sport of taking them. (5.) By all this he shall be pulled up with an intolerable pride, which shall be his destruction, *ver. 11. Then shall his mind change for the worse.* The spirit both of the people and of the king shall grow more haughty and insolent. Those that will not be content with their own rights, neither will they be content when they have made themselves masters of other people's rights too; but as the condition riseth the mind riseth too; this victorious king shall pass over all the bounds of reason and equity and modesty, and break through all their bonds, and thereby he shall offend, shall make God his enemy, and so prepare ruin for himself by imputing this his power to his god, whereas he had it from the God of Israel: Bel and Nebo were the gods of the Chaldeans, and to them they gave the glory of their successes; were hardened in their idolatry, and blasphemously argued, that because they had conquered Israel, their gods were too strong for the god of Israel. Note, It is a great offence (and the common offence of proud people) to take that glory to ourselves, or give it to gods of our own making, which is due to the living and true God only. These closing words of the sentence give a glimpse of comfort to the afflicted people of God; it is to be hoped they will change their minds and grow better, and ripen for deliverance, and they did so. However, their enemies will change their minds, and grow worse, and ripen for destruction, which will inevitably come in God's due time; for a haughty spirit lifted up against God goes before a fall.

12. ¶ Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine holy One? we shall not die: O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment, and O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. 13. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devour the man that is more righteous than he? 14. And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things that have no ruler over them? 15. They take up all of them with the angle: they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag: because by them their portion is fat and their meat plenteous. 17. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

The prophet having received of the Lord, that which he was to deliver to the people, now turns to God, and again addresseth himself to him for the ease of his own mind under the burden which he saw. And still he is full of complaints: If he look about him he sees nothing but violence done by Israel, if he look before him he sees nothing but violence done against Israel, and it is hard to say which is the more melancholy sight; his thoughts of both he pours out before the Lord: It is our duty to be affected both with the iniquities and with the calamities of the church of God, and of the times and places wherein we live; but we must take heed lest we grow peevish in our resentments, and carry them too far, so as to entertain any hard thoughts of God, or lose the comfort of our communion with him. The world is bad, and always was so, and will be so; it is out of our power to mend it; but we are sure that God governs the world, and will bring glory to himself out of all, and therefore we must resolve to make the best of it, must be ourselves better, and long for the better world. The prospect of the prevalency of the Chaldeans drives the prophet to his knees, and he takes the liberty to plead with God concerning it. And in his plea we may observe,

1. The truth he lays down, which he resolves to abide by, and with which he endeavours to comfort himself and his friends, under the growing, threatening power of the Chaldeans; and they will furnish us with pleasing considerations for our support in the like case.

(1.) However it be, yet God is the Lord, our God, and our holy One. The victorious Chaldeans impute their power to their idols, but we are taught to tell them, that the God of Israel is the true God, the living God, *Jer. x. 10, 11.* (1.) He is Jehovah, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection; our rock is not as theirs. (2.) He is my God. He speaks in the people's name, every Israelite may say, he is mine; though we are thus forebroken, and all this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten the name of our God, nor quitted our relation to him, yet have we not disowned him, nor hath he disowned us, *Psal. xlv. 17.* We are an offending people, he an offending God, yet he is ours, and we will not entertain any hard thoughts of him or of his service for all this. (3.) He is my holy One; which intimates that the prophet loved God as a holy God, loved him for the sake of his holiness; he is mine, because he is a holy One; and therefore he will be my Sanctifier and my Saviour, because he is my holy One. Men are unholy, but my God is holy.

(2.) Our God is from everlasting. This he pleads with him, Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God? It is matter of great and continual comfort to God's people, under the troubles of this present life, that their God is from everlasting: Which speaks, (1.) The eternity of his nature; if he is from everlasting he will be to everlasting, and we must have recourse to this first principle, when things seen that are temporal are discouraging, that we have hope and help sufficient in a God that is not seen, that is eternal. Art thou not from everlasting, and then wilt thou not make bare thine everlasting arm in pursuance of thine everlasting counsels, to make unto thyself an everlasting name? (2.) The antiquity of his covenant. Art thou not from of old, a God in covenant with thy people, so some under-



stand it; and hast thou not done great things for them in the days of old, which we have heard with our ears, and which our fathers have told us of: and art thou not the same God still that thou ever wast? Thou art God and changeest not.

(3.) While the world stands God will have a church in it. Thou art from everlasting, and then we shall not die. The Israel of God shall not be extirpated, nor the name of Israel blotted out, though it may sometimes seem to be very near it; like the apostles, *2 Cor. vi. 9, chastened and not killed; chastened sore, but not delivered over to death*, *Psal. cxviii. 18*. See how the prophet infers the perpetuity of the church from the eternity of God; for Christ hath said, *Because I live*, and therefore, as long as I live, ye shall live also, *John xiv. 19*. He is the rock on which the church is so firmly built that the gates of hell shall not, cannot prevail against it, *We shall not die*.

(4.) Whatever the enemies of the church may do against her, it is according to the counsel of God, and is designed and directed for wise and holy ends. Thou hast ordained them, thou hast established them; it was God that gave the Chaldeans their power, made them a formidable people, and in his counsel determined what they should do, nor had they any power against his Israel, but what was given them from above. He gave them their commission to take the spoil, and to take the prey, *Isa. x. 6*. Herein God appears a mighty God, that the power of mighty men is derived from him, and depends upon him, and is under his check; he saith concerning it, *hitherto shall it come, and no farther*. They whom God ordains shall do no more than what God has ordained, which is a great comfort to God's suffering people: men are God's hand, the rod in his hand, *Psal. cxviii. 14*. And he hath ordained them for judgment, and for correction; God's people need correction, and deserve it, they must expect it, they shall have it; when wicked men are let loose against them, it is not for their destruction, that they may be ruined, but for their correction, that they may be reformed; they are not intended for a sword to cut them off, but a rod to drive out the foolishness that is found in their hearts, though they mean not so, *neither doth their heart think so*, *Isa. x. 7*. Note, It is matter of great comfort to us, in reference to the troubles and afflictions of the church, that whatever mischief men design to them, God designs to bring good out of them, and we are sure his counsel shall stand.

(5.) Though the wickedness of the wicked may prosper for a while, yet God is a holy God, and doth not approve of that wickedness, *ver. 13*. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil. The prophet observing how very vicious and impious the Chaldeans were, and yet what great success they had against God's Israel, found a temptation arising from it to say, that it was vain to serve God, and indifferent to him what men were; but he soon suppresses the thought, by having recourse to his first principle, that God is not, that he cannot be, the author or patron of sin; he cannot do iniquity himself, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with any allowance or approbation: No, it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates: He sees all the sin that is committed in the world, and it is an offence to him, it is odious in his eyes, and those that commit it are thereby made obnoxious to his justice: there is in the nature of God an antipathy to those dispositions and practices that are contrary to his holy law; and though an expedient is happily found out for his being reconciled to sinners, yet he never will or can be reconciled to sin. And this principle we must resolve to abide by, though the dispensations of his providence may for a time, and in some instances, seem to be inconsistent with it. Note, God's connivance at sin must never be interpreted his giving countenance to it, for he is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness, *Psal. v. 4, 5*. The iniquity, which it is here said God doth not look upon, may be meant especially of the mischief done to God's people by their persecutors; though God sees cause to permit it, yet he doth not approve of it: so it agrees with that of Balaam, *Numb. xxiii. 21*. He hath not beheld iniquity against Jacob, nor seen with allowance perverseness against Israel; which is very comfortable to the people of God in their afflictions by the rage of men, that they cannot infer God's anger from it; though the instruments of their trouble hate them, it doth not therefore follow that God doth; nay, he loves them, and it is in love that he doth correct them.

2. The grievances he complains of, and finds hard to reconcile with these truths; since we are sure thou art a holy God, why have atheists temptations given them to question whether thou art so or no? Wherefore lookest thou upon the Chaldeans that deal treacherously with thy people, and givest them success in their attempts upon us? Why dost thou suffer thy sworn enemies that blaspheme thy name to deal thus cruelly, thus perfidiously with thy sworn subjects that desire to fear thy name? What shall we say to this? This was a temptation to Job, *chap. xxi. 7—xxiv. 1*. To David, *Psal. lxxiii. 2, 3*. To Jeremiah, *chap. xii. 1, 2*.

1. That God permitted sin and was patient with the sinners. He looked upon them, he saw all their wicked doings and designs, and did not restrain or punish them; but suffered them to speed in their purposes, to go on and prosper, and to carry all before them. Nay, his looking upon them intimates, that he not only gave them no check or rebuke, but gave them encouragement and assistance, as if he smiled upon them and favoured them. He held his tongue when they went on in their wicked courses, said nothing against them, gave no orders to stop them. These things thou hast done, and I kept silence.

2. That his patience was abused, and because sentence against these evil works and workers was not executed speedily, therefore their hearts were the more fully set in them to do evil.

1. They were false and deceitful, and there was no credit to be given them, nor any confidence to be put in them. They deal treacherously; under colour of peace and friendship they prosecute and execute the most mischievous designs, and make no conscience of their word in any thing.

2. They hated and persecuted men because they were better than themselves, as Cain hated Abel because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. The wicked devour the man that is more righteous than he, for that very reason, because he shames him; they have an ill-will to the image of God, and therefore devour good men because they bear that image. Though many of the Jews were as bad as the Chaldeans themselves and worse, yet there were those among them that were much more righteous, and yet were devoured by them.

3. They make no more of killing men than of catching fish; the prophet complains, that providence having delivered up the weaker to be a prey to the stronger, they were in effect made as the fishes of the sea, *ver. 14*. So they had been among themselves, preying upon one another as the greater fishes do upon the lesser, *ver. 3*, and they were made so to the common enemy. They were as the creeping things or swimming things, for the word is used for fish, *Gen. i. 20*. that have no ruler over them, either to restrain them from devouring one another, or to protect them from being devoured by their enemies. They are given up to the Chaldeans as fish to the fishermen: those proud oppressors make no conscience of killing them, no more than men do of pulling fish out of the water, so small account do they make of human lives. They make no difficulty of killing them, but do it with as much ease as men catch fish, that make no resistance, but are unguarded and

unarmed, and it is rather a pastime than any pain to take them. They make no distinction among them, but all is fish that comes to their net; and they reckon every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. They have various ways of spoiling and destroying, as men have of taking fish. Some they take up with the angle, *ver. 15*, one by one; others they catch in shoals, and by wholesale in their net and gather them in their drag, their inclosing net. Such variety of methods have they to destroy those by whom they hope to enrich themselves.

4. They gloried in what they got, and pleased themselves with it though it was got dishonestly. Their portion is fat, and their meat plentiful, they prosper in their oppression and fraud, they have a great deal, and it is of the best; their land is good, and they have abundance of it: And therefore, (1.) They have a great complacency in themselves and are very pleasant, they live merrily, *ver. 15*. Therefore they rejoice and are glad, because their wealth is great and their projects succeed, for the increase of it, *Job xxxi. 25*. Soul, take thine ease, *Luke xii. 19*. (2.) They have a great conceit of themselves, and are very much in love with themselves, and mighty admirers of their own ingenuity and conduct; they sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag: they applaud themselves for having got so much money, though never so dishonestly. Note, There is a proneness in us to take the glory of our outward prosperity to ourselves, and to say, *My might, and the power of my hands has gotten me this wealth*, *Deut. viii. 17*. And this is idolizing ourselves, sacrificing to the drag-net, because it is our own, which is as absurd a piece of idolatry as sacrificing to Neptune or Dagon. That which makes them adore their net thus, is because by it it their portion is fat. They that make a god of their money will make a god of their drag-net, if they can but get money by it.

Lastly, The prophet in the close humbly expresseth his hope, that God will not suffer these destroyers of mankind always to go on and prosper thus, and excommunicates with God concerning it, *ver. 17*. Shall they therefore empty their net? Shall they enrich themselves, and fill their own vessels with that which they have by violence and oppression taken away from their neighbours? Shall they empty their net of what they have caught, that they may cast it into the sea again to catch more? and wilt thou suffer them to proceed in this wicked course? Shall they not spare continually to slay the nations? Must the numbers and wealth of nations be sacrificed to their net? As if it were a small thing to rob men of their estates, shall they rob God of his glory? Is not God the king of nations? And will he not assert their injured rights? Is he not jealous for his own honour, and will he not maintain that? The prophet lodgeth the matter in God's hand, and leaves it with him as the psalmist doth, *Psal. lxxiv. 22*. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.

## CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have an answer expected by the prophet, *ver. 1*, and returned by the Spirit of God, to the complaints which the prophet made of the violences and victories of the Chaldeans in the close of the foregoing chapter. The answer is, (1.) That after God hath served his own purposes by the prevailing power of the Chaldeans, has tried the faith and patience of his people and distinguished between the hypocrites and the sincere among them, he will reckon with the Chaldeans; will humble and bring down not only that proud monarch Nebuchadnezzar, but that proud monarchy, for their boundless and insatiable thirst after dominion and wealth, for which they themselves should at length be made a prey, *ver. 2—8*. (2.) That not they only, but all other sinners like them, should perish under a divine woe. (1.) Those that are covetous, are greedy of wealth and honours, *ver. 9—11*. (2.) Those that are injurious and oppressive, and raise estates by wrong and rapine, *ver. 12—14*. (3.) Those that promote drunkenness, that they may expose their neighbours to shame, *ver. 15—17*. (4.) Those that worship idols, *ver. 18—20*.

1. I Will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. 2. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. 4. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Here, 1. The prophet humbly gives his attendance upon God, *ver. 1*. I will stand upon my watch as a sentinel on the walls of a besieged city or in the borders of an invaded country, that is very solicitous to gain intelligence; I will look up, will look round, will look within, and watch to see what he will say unto me, will listen attentively to the words of his mouth, and carefully observe the steps of his providence, that I may not lose the least hint of instruction or direction. I will watch to see what he will say in me, so it may be read; what the spirit of prophecy in me will dictate to me, by way of answer to my complaints. And even in an ordinary way, God not only speaks to us by his word, but speaks in us by our own consciences, whispering to us, *this is the way, walk in it*; and we must attend to the voice of God in both. The prophet's standing upon his tower or high-place speaks his prudence, in making use of the helps and means he had within his reach to know the mind of God, and to be instructed concerning it. Those that expect to hear from God, must withdraw from the world and get above it, must raise their attention, fix their thought, study the scriptures, consult experiences and the experienced, and continue instant in prayer, and thus set themselves upon the tower. His standing upon his watch speaks his patience, his constancy and resolution, he will wait the time, and weather the point as a watchman doth, but he will have an answer; he will know what God will say to him, not only for his own satisfaction, but to enable him as a prophet to give satisfaction to others, and answer their expectations when he is reproved or argued with. Herein the prophet is an example to us. (1.) When we are tossed and perplexed with doubts concerning the methods of providence, are tempted to think it is fate or fortune, and not a wise God that governs the world, or that the church is abandoned, and God's covenant with his people cancelled and laid aside; then we must take pains to furnish ourselves with considerations proper to clear this matter; we must stand upon our watch against the temptation, that it may not get ground upon us; must set ourselves upon the tower, to see if we can discover that which will silence the temptation and solve the objected difficulties; must do as the psalmist, consider the days of old, and make a dili-



gent search, Psal. lxxvi. 6. must go into the sanctuary of God, and there labour to understand the end of these things, Psalm lxxviii. 17. we must not give way to our doubts, but struggle to make the best of our way out of them. (2.) When we have been at prayer, pouring out our complaints and requests before God, we must carefully observe what answers God gives by his word, his spirit, and his providences to our humble representations; When David saith, *I will direct my prayer unto thee*, as an arrow to the mark, he adds, *I will look up*, will look after my prayer, as a man doth after the arrow he hath shot, Psalm v. 3. must hear what God the Lord will speak, Psal. lxxxv. 8. (3.) When we go to read and hear the word of God, and so to consult the lively oracles, we must set ourselves to observe what God will thereby say unto us to suit our case, what word of conviction, caution, counsel, and comfort he will bring to our souls, that we may receive it and submit to the power of it, and may consider what we shall answer, what returns we shall make to the word of God when we are reproved by it. (4.) When we are attacked by such as quarrel with God and his providence, as the prophet here seems to have been beset, besieged as in a tower by hosts of objectors, we should consider how to answer them, fetch our instructions from God, hear what he saith to us for our satisfaction, and have that ready to say to others when we are reproved, to satisfy them, as a reason of the hope that is in us, 1 Pet. iii. 15. and beg of God a mouth and wisdom, and that it may be given us in that same hour what we shall speak.

2. God graciously gives him the meeting; for he will not disappoint the believing expectations of his people that wait to hear what he will say unto them; but will speak peace, will answer them with good words and with comfortable words, Zech. i. 13. The prophet had complained of the prevalency of the Chaldeans, which God had given him a prospect of, now to pacify him concerning it, he here gives him a farther prospect of their fall and ruin, as Isaiah before this, when he had foretold the captivity in Babylon, foretold also the destruction of Babylon. Now this great and important event being made known to him by a vision, care is taken to publish the vision, and transmit it to the generation to come, who should see the accomplishment of it.

1. The prophet must write the vision, ver. 2. Thus when St. John had a vision of the New Jerusalem, he was ordered to write, Rev. xxi. 5. He must write it, that he might imprint it on his own mind, and make it more clear to himself: but especially that it might be notified to those in distant places, and transmitted to those in future ages: What is handed by tradition is easily mistaken and liable to corruption, but what is written is reduced to a certainty and preserved safe and pure. We have reason to bless God for written visions, that God has written to us the great things of his prophets, as well as of his law. He must write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, must write it legibly, in large characters, so that he that runs may read it, that those who will not allow themselves leisure to read it deliberately, may not avoid a cursory view of it. Probably the prophets were wont to write some of the most remarkable of their predictions in tables, and to hang them up in the temple, Isa. viii. 1. Now the prophet is bid to write this very plain. Note, Those that are employed in preaching the word of God, should study plainness as much as may be, so as to make them intelligible to the meanest capacities. The things of our ever-lasting peace, which God has written to us, are made plain, they are all plain to him that understandeth, Prov. viii. 9. and they are published with authority; God himself has fixed his imprimatur to them; he hath said, make them plain.

2. The people must wait for the accomplishment of the vision, ver. 3. The vision is yet for an appointed time to come. You shall now be told of your deliverance by the breaking of the Chaldean power, and that the time of it is fixed in the counsel and decree of God, there is an appointed time, but it is not near, it is yet to be deferred a great while; and that comes in here as a reason why it must be written; that it may be reviewed afterwards and the event compared with it. Note, God has an appointed time for his appointed work, and will be sure to do the work when the time comes; and it is not for us to anticipate his appointments, but to wait his time. And it is a great encouragement to wait with patience, that though the promised favour be deferred long, it will come at last, and be an abundant recompence to us for our waiting. At the end it shall speak and not lie, we shall not be disappointed of it, for it will come at the time appointed, nor shall we be disappointed in it, for it will fully answer our believing expectations. The promise may seem silent a great while, but at the end it shall speak; and therefore though it tarry longer than we expected, yet we must continue waiting for it; being assured it will come, and willing to tarry until it doth come. The day that God hath set for the deliverance of his people, and the destruction of his and their enemies is a day, (1.) That will surely come at last; it is never adjoined sine die, but it will without fail come at the fixed time and the fittest time. (2.) It will not tarry, for God is not slack, as some count slackness, 2 Pet. iii. 9. though it tarry past our time, yet it doth not tarry past God's time, which is always the best time.

3. This vision, the accomplishment of which is so long waited for, will be such an exercise of faith and patience, as will try and discover men what they are, ver. 4. (1.) There are some who will proudly disdain this vision, whose hearts are so lifted up, that they scorn to take notice of it, if God will work for them presently, they will thank him, but they will not give him credit; their hearts are lifted up towards vanity, and since God puts them off, they will shift for themselves, and not be beholden to him; they think their own hands sufficient for them, and God's promise is to them an insignificant thing; That man's soul that is thus lifted up, is not upright in him; he is not right with God, is not as he should be. Those that either distrust or despise God's all-sufficiency will not walk uprightly with him, Gen. xvii. 1. But, (2.) Those that are truly good, and whose hearts are upright with God, will value the promise, and venture their all upon it; and, in confidence of the truth of it, will keep close to God and duty in the most difficult trying times, and will then live comfortably in communion with God, dependence on him, and expectation of him. The just shall live by faith, i. e. during the captivity, good people shall support themselves, and live comfortably by faith in those precious promises, while the performance of them is deferred. The just shall live by his faith, by that faith which he acts upon the word of God. This is quoted in the New Testament, Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. Heb. x. for the proof of the great doctrine of justification by faith only, and of the influence which the grace of faith has upon the Christian life. Those that are made just by faith shall live, shall be happy here and for ever; and while they are here they live by it, when they come to heaven, faith shall be swallowed up in vision.

5. ¶ Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations and

heapeth unto him all people. 6. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay; 7. Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? 8. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land of the city, and of all that dwell therein. 9. ¶ Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! 10. Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. 11. For the stones shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. 12. ¶ Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity. 13. Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity. 14. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The prophet having had orders to write the vision, and the people to wait for the accomplishment of it, the vision itself follows; and it is, as divers other prophecies we have met with, the burden of Babylon, as Babylon's king; the same that was said to pass over and offend, chap. i. 11. It reads the doom, some think, of Nebuchadnezzar, who was principally active in the destruction of Jerusalem: or of that monarchy, or of the whole kingdom of the Chaldeans, or of all such proud and oppressive powers that bear hard upon any people, especially upon God's people. Observe,

1. The charge laid down against this enemy, upon which the sentence is grounded, ver. 5. The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are the entangling snares of men, and great men especially; and we find him that led Israel captive, himself led captive by each of these. For, (1.) He is sensual and voluptuous, and given to his pleasures; he transgresseth by wine, drunkenness is itself a transgression, and is the cause of abundance of transgression. We read of those that err through wine, Isa. xxviii. 7. Belshazzar (in whom particularly this prophecy had its accomplishment) was in the height of his transgression, by wine, when the hand-writing upon the wall signed the warrant for his immediate execution pursuant to the sentence, Dan. v. 1. (2.) He is haughty and imperious, he is a proud man, and his pride is a certain presage of his fall coming on. If great men be proud men, the great God will make them know he is above them. His transgression by wine is made the cause of his arrogance and insolence, therefore he is a proud man. When a man is drunk, though he make himself as mean as a beast, yet he thinks himself as great as a king, and prides himself in that by which he shames himself. We find the crown of pride upon the head of the drunkard of Ephraim, and a woe to both, Isa. xxviii. 1. (3.) He is covetous and greedy of wealth, and this is the effect of his pride; he thinks himself worthy to enjoy all, and therefore makes it his business to engross all. The Chaldean monarchy aimed to be an universal one. He keepeth not at home, is not content with his own, which he has an incontestable title to, but thinks it too little, and so enjoys it not, nor takes the comfort he might in his own palace, in his own dominion; is sin is his punishment, and his ambition is perpetual uneasiness. Though the home be a palace, yet to a discontented mind it is a prison. He enlargeth his desire as hell or the grave, that daily receives the body of the dead, and yet still cries, give, give; he is as death which continues to devour, and cannot be satisfied. Note, It is the sin and folly of many that have a great deal of the wealth of this world, that they do not know when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have, and the more eager they are for it. And it is just with God, that the desires that are unsatisfiable should still be unsatisfied; it is the doom passed on those that love silver, that they shall never be satisfied with it, Ezek. v. 10. They that will not be content with their allotments, shall not have the comfort of their achievements. This proud prince is still gathering to him all nations, and heaping to him all people, invading their rights, seizing their properties, and they must not be unless they will be his, and under his command. One nation will not satisfy him unless he has another, and then another and all at last; as those in a lower sphere, to gratify the same inordinate desire, lay house to house, and field to field, that they may be placed alone in the earth, Isa. v. 8. And it is hard to say which is more to be pitied, the folly of such ambitious princes, that place their honour in enlarging their dominions, and not in ruling them well, or the misery of those nations that are harassed and pulled to pieces by them.

2. The sentence passed upon him, ver. 6. Shall not all these take up a parable against him? His doom is, (1.) That since pride has been his sin, disgrace and dishonour shall be his punishment, and he shall be loaded with contempt, shall be laughed at and despised by all about him: as those that look big and aim high deserve to be, and commonly are when they are brought down and baffled. (2.) That since he has been abusive to his neighbours, those very persons whom he has abused shall be the instruments of his disgrace; All those shall take up a taunting proverb against him. They shall have the pleasure of insulting over him, and he the shame of being trampled upon by them.

Those that shall triumph in the fall of this great tyrant, are here furnished with a parable and taunting proverb to take up against him. He shall say, he that draws up the insulting ditty shall say thus, Ho, he that increaseth that which is not his; Aha, what is gone with him now? So it may be read in a taunting way. Or he shall say, i. e. the just that lives by his faith, he to whom the vision is written and made plain, with the help of that, he shall say this, shall foretell the enemy's fall, even when he sees him flourishing, and suddenly curse his habitation, even when he is taking root, Job v. 3. He shall indeed denounce woes against him.

1. Here is a woe against him for increasing his own possessions, by invading his neighbours rights, ver. 6, 7, 8. He increaseth that which is not his but other people's. Note, No more of what we have is to be reckoned ours but what we came honestly by; nor will it long be ours, for wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not those that thrive in the world be too forward to bless themselves in it, for if they do not thrive lawfully they are under a woe. See here, (1.) What this prosperous prince is doing; he is



stand it; and hast thou not done great things for them in the days of old, which we have heard with our ears, and which our fathers have told us of: and art thou not the same God still that thou ever wast? Thou art God and changeest not.

(3.) While the world stands God will have a church in it. Thou art from everlasting, and then *we shall not die*. The ligament of God shall not be extirpated, nor the name of Israel blotted out, though it may sometimes seem to be very near it; like the apostles, *2 Cor. vi. 9, chastened and not killed; chastened sore, but not delivered over to death*, Psal. cxviii. 18. See how the prophet infers the perpetuity of the church from the eternity of God; for Christ hath said, *Because I live, and therefore, as long as I live, ye shall live also*, John xiv. 19. He is the rock on which the church is so firmly built that the gates of hell shall not, cannot prevail against it, *We shall not die*.

(4.) Whatever the enemies of the church may do against her, it is according to the counsel of God, and is designed and directed for wise and holy ends. *Thou hast ordained them, thou hast established them*; it was God that gave the Chaldeans their power, made them a formidable people, and in his counsel determined what they should do, nor had they any power against his Israel, but what was given them from above. He gave them their commission to *take the spoil, and to take the prey*, Isa. x. 6. Herein God appears a mighty God, that the power of mighty men is derived from him, and depends upon him, and is under his check; he saith concerning it, *hitherto shall it come, and no farther*. They whom God ordains shall do no more than what God has ordained, which is a great comfort to God's suffering people: men are God's hand, the rod in his hand, *Psal. xvii. 14*. And he hath ordained them for judgment, and for correction; God's people need correction, and deserve it, they must expect it, they shall have it; when wicked men are let loose against them, it is not for their destruction, that they may be ruined, but for their correction, that they may be reformed; they are not intended for a sword to cut them off, but a rod to drive out the foolishness that is found in their hearts, though they mean not so, *neither doth their heart think so*, Isa. x. 7. Note, It is matter of great comfort to us, in reference to the troubles and afflictions of the church, that whatever mischief men design to them, God designs to bring good out of them, and we are sure his counsel shall stand.

(5.) Though the wickedness of the wicked may prosper for a while, yet God is a holy God, and doth not approve of that wickedness, *ver. 13*. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil*. The prophet observing how very vicious and impious the Chaldeans were, and yet what great success they had against God's Israel, found a temptation arising from it to say, that it was vain to serve God, and indifferent to him what men were; but he soon suppresses the thought, by having recourse to his first principle, that God is not, that he cannot be, the author or patron of sin; as he cannot do iniquity himself, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with any allowance or approbation: No, it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates: He sees all the sin that is committed in the world, and it is an offence to him, it is odious in his eyes, and those that commit it are thereby made obnoxious to his justice: there is in the nature of God an antipathy to those dispositions and practices that are contrary to his holy law; and though an expedient is happily found out for his being reconciled to sinners, yet he never will or can be reconciled to sin. And this principle we must resolve to abide by, though the dispensations of his providence may for a time, and in some instances, seem to be inconsistent with it. Note, God's countenance at sin must never be interpreted his giving countenance to it, for he is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness, *Psal. v. 4, 5*. The iniquity, which it is here said God doth not look upon, may be meant especially of the mischief done to God's people by their persecutors; though God sees cause to permit it, yet he doth not approve of it: so it agrees with that of Balaam, *Numb. xxiii. 21*. *He hath not beheld iniquity against Jacob*, nor seen with allowance *persecutions against Israel*; which is very comfortable to the people of God in their afflictions by the rage of men, that they cannot infer God's anger from it; though the instruments of their trouble hate them, it doth not therefore follow that God doth; nay, he loves them, and it is in love that he doth correct them.

2. The grievances he complains of, and finds hard to reconcile with these truths; since we are sure thou art a holy God, why have atheists temptations given them to question whether thou art so or no? *Wherefore lookest thou upon the Chaldeans that deal treacherously* with thy people, and givest them success in their attempts upon us? Why dost thou suffer thy sworn enemies that blaspheme thy name to deal thus cruelly, thus perfidiously with thy sworn subjects that desire to fear thy name? What shall we say to this? This was a temptation to Job, *chap. xxi. 7—xxiv. 1*. To David, *Psal. lxxiii. 2, 3*. To Jeremiah, *chap. xii. 1, 2*.

1. That God permitted sin and was patient with the sinners. He looked upon them, he saw all their wicked doings and designs, and did not restrain or punish them; but suffered them to speed in their purposes, to go on and prosper, and to carry all before them. Nay, his looking upon them intimates, that he not only gave them no check or rebuke, but gave them encouragement and assistance, as if he smiled upon them and favoured them. He held his tongue when they went on in their wicked courses, said nothing against them, gave no orders to stop them. *These things thou hast done, and I kept silence*.

2. That his patience was abused, and because sentence against these evil works and workers was not executed speedily, therefore their hearts were the more fully set in them to do evil.

1. They were false and deceitful, and there was no credit to be given them, nor any confidence to be put in them. They deal treacherously; under colour of peace and friendship they prosecute and execute the most malicious designs, and make no conscience of their word in any thing.

2. They hated and persecuted men because they were better than themselves, as Cain hated Abel because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. The wicked devour the man that is more righteous than he, for that very reason, because he shames him; they have an ill-will to the image of God, and therefore devour good men because they bear that image. Though many of the Jews were as bad as the Chaldeans themselves and worse, yet there were those among them that were much more righteous, and yet were devoured by them.

3. They make no more of killing men than of catching fish; the prophet complains, that providence having delivered up the weaker to be a prey to the stronger, they were in effect made as the fishes of the sea, *ver. 14*. So they had been among themselves, preying upon one another as the greater fishes do upon the lesser, *ver. 3*, and they were made so to the common enemy. They were as the creeping things or scimming things, for the word is used for fish, *Gen. i. 20*. that have no ruler over them, either to restrain them from devouring one another, or to protect them from being devoured by their enemies. They are given up to the Chaldeans as fish to the fishermen: those proud oppressors make no conscience of killing them, no more than men do of pulling fish out of the water, so small account do they make of human lives. They make no difficulty of killing them, but do it with as much ease as men catch fish, that make no resistance, but are unguarded and

unarmed, and it is rather a pastime than any pain to take them. They make no distinction among them, but all is fish that comes to their net; and they reckon every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. They have various ways of sp'ling and destroying, as men have of taking fish. Some they take up with the angle, *ver. 15*, one by one; others they catch in shoals, and by wholesale in their net and gather them in their drag, their inclosing net. Such variety of methods have they to destroy those by whom they hope to enrich themselves.

4. They gloried in what they got, and pleased themselves with it though it was got dishonestly. *Their portion is fat, and their meat plentiful*, they prosper in their oppression and fraud, they have a great deal, and it is of the best; their land is good, and they have abundance of it: And therefore, (1.) They have a great complacency in themselves and are very pleasant, they live merrily, *ver. 15*. *Therefore they rejoice and are glad*, because their wealth is great and their projects succeed, for the increase of it, *Job xxxi. 25*. *Soul, take thine ease*, *Luke xii. 19*. (2.) They have a great conceit of themselves, and are very much in love with themselves, and mighty admirers of their own ingenuity and conduct; they sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag: they applaud themselves for having got so much money, though never so dishonestly. Note, There is a proneness in us to take the glory of our outward prosperity to ourselves, and to say, *My might, and the power of my hands has gotten me this wealth*, *Deut. viii. 17*. And this is idolizing ourselves, sacrificing to the drag-net, because it is our own, which is as absurd a piece of idolatry as sacrificing to Neptune or Dagon. That which makes them adore their net thus, is because by it it their portion is fat. They that make a god of their money will make a god of their drag-net, if they can but get money by it.

Lastly, The prophet in the close humbly expresseth his hope, that God will not suffer these destroyers of mankind always to go on and prosper thus, and excommunicates with God concerning it, *ver. 17*. *Shall they therefore empty their net?* Shall they enrich themselves, and fill their own vessels with that which they have by violence and oppression taken away from their neighbours? Shall they empty their net of what they have caught, that they may cast it into the sea again to catch more? and wilt thou suffer them to proceed in this wicked course? Shall they not spare continually to slay the nations? Must the numbers and wealth of nations be sacrificed to their net? As if it were a small thing to rob men of their estates, shall they rob God of his glory? Is not God the king of nations? And will he not assert their injured rights? Is he not jealous for his own honour, and will he not maintain that? The prophet lodgeth the matter in God's hand, and leaves it with him as the psalmist doth, *Psal. lxxiv. 22*. *Arise, O God, plead thine own cause*.

## CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have an answer expected by the prophet, *ver. 1*, and returned by the Spirit of God, to the complaints which the prophet made of the violence and victories of the Chaldeans in the close of the foregoing chapter. The answer is, (1.) That after God hath served his own purposes by the prevailing power of the Chaldeans, has tried the faith and patience of his people and distinguished between the hypocrites and the sincere among them, he will reckon with the Chaldeans; will humble and bring down not only that proud monarch Nebuchadnezzar, but that proud monarchy, for their boundless and insatiable thirst after dominion and wealth, for which they themselves should at length be made a prey, *ver. 2—8*. (2.) That not they only, but all other sinners like them, should perish under a divine woe. (1.) Those that are covetous, are greedy of wealth and honours, *ver. 9—11*. (2.) Those that are injurious and oppressive, and raise estates by wrong and rapine, *ver. 12—14*. (3.) Those that promote drunkenness, that they may expose their neighbours to shame, *ver. 15—17*. (4.) Those that worship idols, *ver. 18—20*.

1. I Will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. 2. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. 4. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Here, 1. The prophet humbly gives his attendance upon God, *ver. 1*. I will stand upon my watch as a centinel on the walls of a besieged city or in the borders of an invaded country, that is very solicitous to gain intelligence; I will look up, will look round, will look within, and watch to see what he will say unto me, will listen attentively to the words of his mouth, and carefully observe the steps of his providence, that I may not lose the least hint of instruction or direction. I will watch to see what he will say in me, so it may be read; what the spirit of prophecy in me will dictate to me, by way of answer to my complaints. And even in an ordinary way, God not only speaks to us by his word, but speaks in us by our own consciences, whispering to us, *this is the way, walk in it*; and we must attend to the voice of God in both. The prophet's standing upon his tower or high-place speaks his prudence, in making use of the helps and means he had within his reach to know the mind of God, and to be instructed concerning it. Those that expect to hear from God, must withdraw from the world and get above it, must raise their attention, fix their thought, study the scriptures, consult experiences and the experienced, and continue instant in prayer, and thus set themselves upon the tower. His standing upon his watch speaks his patience, his constancy and resolution, he will wait the time, and weather the point as a watchman doth, but he will have an answer; he will know what God will say to him, not only for his own satisfaction, but to enable him as a prophet to give satisfaction to others, and answer their expectations when he is reproved or argued with. Herein the prophet is an example to us. (1.) When we are tossed and perplexed with doubts concerning the methods of providence, are tempted to think it is fate or fortune, and not a wise God that governs the world, or that the church is abandoned, and God's covenant with his people cancelled and laid aside; then we must take pains to furnish ourselves with considerations proper to clear this matter; we must stand upon our watch against the temptation, that it may not get ground upon us; must set ourselves upon the tower, to see if we can discover that which will silence the temptation and solve the objected difficulties; must do as the psalmist, consider the days of old, and make a dili-



gent search, Psal. lxxvi. 6. must go into the sanctuary of God, and there labour to understand the end of these things, Psalm lxxviii. 17. we must not give way to our doubts, but struggle to make the best of our way out of them. (2.) When we have been at prayer, pouring out our complaints and requests before God, we must carefully observe what answers God gives by his word, his spirit, and his providences to our humble representations; When David saith, *I will direct my prayer unto thee*, as an arrow to the mark, he adds, *I will look up*, will look after my prayer, as a man doth after the arrow he hath shot, Psalm v. 3. must hear what God the Lord will speak, Psal. lxxv. 8. (3.) When we go to read and hear the word of God, and so to consult the lively oracles, we must set ourselves to observe what God will thereby say unto us to suit our case, what word of conviction, caution, counsel, and comfort he will bring to our souls, that we may receive it and submit to the power of it, and may consider what we shall answer, what returns we shall make to the word of God when we are reproved by it. (4.) When we are attacked by such as quarrel with God and his providence, as the prophet here seems to have been beset, besieged as in a tower by hosts of objectors, we should consider how to answer them, fetch our instructions from God, hear what he saith to us for our satisfaction, and have that ready to say to others when we are reproved, to satisfy them, as a reason of the hope that is in us, 1 Pet. iii. 15. and big of God a mouth and wisdom, and that it may be given us in that same hour what we shall speak.

2. God graciously gives him the meeting; for he will not disappoint the believing expectations of his people that wait to hear what he will say unto them; but will speak peace, will answer them with good words and with comfortable words, Zech. i. 13. The prophet had complained of the prevalency of the Chaldeans, which God had given him a prospect of, now to pacify him concerning it, he here gives him a farther prospect of their fall and ruin, as Isaiah before this, when he had foretold the captivity in Babylon, foretold also the destruction of Babylon. Now this great and important event being made known to him by a vision, care is taken to publish the vision, and transmit it to the generation to come, who should see the accomplishment of it.

1. The prophet must write the vision, ver. 2. Thus when St. John had a vision of the New Jerusalem, he was ordered to write, Rev. xxi. 5. He must write it, that he might imprint it on his own mind, and make it more clear to himself: but especially that it might be notified to those in distant places, and transmitted to those in future ages: What is handed by tradition is easily mistaken and liable to corruption, but what is written is reduced to a certainty and preserved safe and pure. We have reason to bless God for written visions, that God has written to us the great things of his prophets, as well as of his law. He must write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, must write it legibly, in large characters, so that he that runs may read it, that those who will not allow themselves leisure to read it deliberately, may not avoid a cursory view of it. Probably the prophets were wont to write some of the most remarkable of their predictions on tables, and to hang them up in the temple, Isa. viii. 1. Now the prophet is bid to write this very plain. Note, Those that are employed in preaching the word of God, should study plainness as much as may be, so as to make them intelligible to the meanest capacities. The things of our everlasting peace, which God has written to us, are made plain, they are all plain to him that understandeth, Prov. viii. 9. and they are published with authority; God himself has fixed his imprimatur to them; he hath said, make them plain.

2. The people must wait for the accomplishment of the vision, ver. 3. The vision is yet for an appointed time to come. You shall now be told of your deliverance by the breaking of the Chaldean power, and that the time of it is fixed in the counsel and decree of God, there is an appointed time, but it is not near, it is yet to be deferred a great while; and that comes in here as a reason why it must be written; that it may be reviewed afterwards and the event compared with it. Note, God has an appointed time for his appointed work, and will be sure to do the work when the time comes; and it is not for us to anticipate his appointments, but to wait his time. And it is a great encouragement to wait with patience, that though the promised favour be deferred long, it will come at last, and be an abundant recompence to us for our waiting. At the end it shall speak and not lie, we shall not be disappointed of it, for it will come at the time appointed, nor shall we be disappointed in it, for it will fully answer our believing expectations. The promise may seem silent a great while, but at the end it shall speak; and therefore though it tarry longer than we expected, yet we must continue waiting for it; being assured it will come, and willing to tarry until it doth come. The day that God hath set for the deliverance of his people, and the destruction of his and their enemies is a day, (1.) That will surely come at last; it is never adjoined sine die, but it will without fail come at the fixed time and the fittest time. (2.) It will not tarry, for God is not slack, as some count slackness, 2 Pet. iii. 9. though it tarry past our time, yet it doth not tarry past God's time, which is always the best time.

3. This vision, the accomplishment of which is so long waited for, will be such an exercise of faith and patience, as will try and discover men what they are, ver. 4. (1.) There are some who will proudly disdain this vision, whose hearts are so lifted up, that they scorn to take notice of it, if God will work for them presently, they will thank him, but they will not give him credit; their hearts are lifted up towards vanity, and since God puts them off, they will shift for themselves, and not be beholden to him; they think their own hands sufficient for them, and God's promise is to them an insignificant thing; That man's soul that is thus lifted up is not upright in him; he is not right with God, is not as he should be. Those that either distrust or despise God's all-sufficiency will not walk uprightly with him, Gen. xvii. 1. But, (2.) Those that are truly good, and whose hearts are upright with God, will value the promise, and venture their all upon it; and, in confidence of the truth of it, will keep close to God and duty in the most difficult trying times, and will then live comfortably in communion with God, dependence on him, and expectation of him. The just shall live by faith, i. e. during the captivity, good people shall support themselves, and live comfortably by faith in these precious promises, while the performance of them is deferred. The just shall live by his faith, by that faith which he acts upon the word of God. This is quoted in the New Testament, Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. Heb. x. for the proof of the great doctrine of justification by faith only, and of the influence which the grace of faith has upon the Christian life. Those that are made just by faith shall live, shall be happy here and for ever; and while they are here they live by it, when they come to heaven, faith shall be swallowed up in vision.

5. ¶ Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations and

heapeth unto him all people. 6. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay; 7. Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? 8. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land of the city, and of all that dwell therein. 9. ¶ Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! 10. Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. 11. For the stones shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. 12. ¶ Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity. 13. Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity. 14. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The prophet having had orders to write the vision; and the people to wait for the accomplishment of it, the vision itself follows; and it is, as diverse other prophecies we have met with, the burden of Babylon, as Babylon's king; the same that was said to pass over and offend, chap. i. 11. It reads one doom, some think, of Nebuchadnezzar, who was principally active in the destruction of Jerusalem: or of that monarchy, or of the whole kingdom of the Chaldeans, or of all such proud and oppressive powers that bear rule upon any people, especially upon God's people. Observe,

1. The charge laid down against this enemy, upon which the sentence is grounded, ver. 5. The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are the entangling snares of men, and great men especially; and we find him that led Israel captive, himself led captive by each of these. For, (1.) He is sensual and voluptuous, and given to his pleasures; he transgresseth by wine, drunkenness is itself a transgression, and is the cause of abundance of transgression. We read of those that err through wine, Isa. xxviii. 7. Belshazzar (in whom particularly this prophecy had its accomplishment) was in the height of his transgression, by wine, when the hand-writing upon the wall signed the warrant for his immediate execution pursuant to the sentence, Dan. v. 1. (2.) He is haughty and imperious, he is a proud man, and his pride is a certain preface of his fall coming on. If great men be proud men, the great God will make them know he is above them. His transgression by wine is made the cause of his arrogance and insolence, therefore he is a proud man. When a man is drunk, though he make himself as mean as a beast, yet he thinks himself as great as a king, and prides himself in that by which he shames himself. We find the crown of pride upon the head of the drunkard of Ephraim, and a woe to both, Isa. xxviii. 1. (3.) He is covetous and greedy of wealth, and this is the effect of his pride; he thinks himself worthy to enjoy all, and therefore makes it his business to engross all. The Chaldean monarchy aimed to be an universal one. He keepeth not at home, is not content with his own, which he has an incontestable title to, but thinks it too little, and so enjoys it not, nor takes the comfort he might in his own palace, in his own dominion; is sin is his punishment, and his ambition is perpetual uneasiness. Though the home be a palace, yet to a discontented mind it is a prison. He enlargeth his desire as hell or the grave, that daily receives the body of the dead, and yet still cries, give, give; he is as death which continues to devour, and cannot be satisfied. Note, It is the sin and folly of many that have a great deal of the wealth of this world, that they do not know when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have, and the more eager they are for it. And it is just with God, that the desires that are unsatisfiable should still be unsatisfied; it is the doom passed on those that love silver, that they shall never be satisfied with it, Ez. k. v. 10. They that will not be content with their allotments, shall not have the comfort of their attainments. This proud prince is all gathering to him all nations, and heaping to him all people, invading their rights, seizing their properties, and they must not be unless they will be his, and under his command. One nation will not satisfy him unless he has another, and then another and all at last; as those in a lower sphere, to gratify the same inordinate desire, lay house to house, and field to field, that they may be placed alone in the earth, Isa. v. 8. And it is hard to say which is more to be pitied, the folly of such ambitious princes, that place their honour in enlarging their dominions, and not in ruling them well, or the misery of those nations that are harassed and pulled to pieces by them.

2. The sentence passed upon him, ver. 6. Shall not all these take up a parable against him? His doom is, (1.) That since pride has been his sin, disgrace and dishonour shall be his punishment, and he shall be loaded with contempt, shall be laughed at and despised by all about him: as those that look big and aim high deserve to be, and commonly are when they are brought down and baffled. (2.) That since he has been abusive to his neighbours, those very persons whom he has abused shall be the instruments of his disgrace; All those shall take up a taunting proverb against him. They shall have the pleasure of insulting over him, and he the shame of being trampled upon by them.

Those that shall triumph in the fall of this great tyrant, are here furnished with a parable and taunting proverb to take up against him. He shall say, he that draws up the insulting ditty shall say thus, Ho, he that increaseth that which is not his; Aha, what is gone with him now? So it may be read in a taunting way. Or he shall say, i. e. the just that lives by his faith, he to whom the vision is written and made plain, with the help of that, he shall say this, shall foretell the enemy's fall, even when he sees him flourishing, and suddenly curse his habitation, even when he is taking root, Job v. 3. He shall indeed denounce woes against him.

1. Here is a woe against him for increasing his own possessions, by invading his neighbours' rights, ver. 6, 7, 8. He increaseth that which is not his but other people's. Note, No more of what we have is to be reckoned ours but what we came honestly by; nor will it long be ours, for wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not those that thrive in the world be too forward to bless themselves in it, for if they do not thrive lawfully they are under a woe. See here, (1.) What this prosperous prince is doing; he is



lading himself with thick clay. Riches are but clay, thick clay; what is gold and silver but white and yellow earth? They that travel through thick clay, are both retarded and dirtied in their journey, so are they that go through the world in the midst of an abundance of the wealth of it; but as if that were not enough, what fool, are they that load themselves with it, as if this trash would be their treasure. They burden themselves with continual care about it, with a great deal of guilt in getting, saving and spending it, and with a heavy account which they must give of it another day. They overlade their ship with this thick clay, and so sink it and themselves into destruction and perdition. (2.) See what people say of him, while he is thus increasing his wealth: they cry, *How long? How long will it be ere he has enough? they cry to God, how long will thou suffer this proud oppressor to trouble the nations? or they say to one another, see how long it will last, how long he will be able to keep what he gets thus dishonestly. They dare not speak out, but we know what they mean when they say, how long? (3.) See what will be the end hereof; what he has got by violence from others, others shall take by violence from him. The Medes and Persians shall make a prey of the Chaldeans, as they have done of other nations, ver. 7, 8. There shall be those that will bite thee and vex thee; they from whom thou didst not fear any danger, that seemed asleep, shall rise up and awake to be a plague to thee. They shall rise up suddenly, when thou art most secure, and least prepared to receive the shock, and ward off the blow. Shall they not rise up suddenly? No doubt they shall, and thou thyself has reason to expect it, to be dealt with as thou hast dealt with others; that thou shalt be for booties unto them, as others have been unto thee; that according to the law of retaliation, as thou hast spoiled many nations, so thou shouldest thyself be spoiled, ver. 8. all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; the king of Babylon thought he had brought all the nations round about him so low, that none of them should have been able to make reprisals upon him; but though they were but a remnant of people, a very few left, yet these shall be sufficient to spoil them, when God hath such a controversy with him. (1.) For men's blood, and the thousands of lives that have been sacrificed to his ambition and revenge, especially for the blood of Israelites, which is in a special manner precious to God. (2.) For the violence of the land, his laying waste so many countries, and destroying the fruits of the earth especially in the land of Israel. (3.) For the violence of the city, the many cities that he had turned into ruinous heaps, especially Jerusalem, the holy city, and of all that dwell therein, who were ruined by him. Note, The violence done by proud men to greatness and enrich themselves will be called over again, and must be accounted for another day, by him to whom vengeance belongs.*

2. Here is a woe against him for coveting still more, and aiming to be still higher, ver. 9, 10, 11. The crime for which this woe is denounced is much the same with that in the foregoing article, an insatiable desire of wealth and honour; it is *coveting an evil covetousness to his house*, i. e. grasping at an abundance for his family. Note, Covetousness is a very evil thing in a family: it brings disquiet and uneasiness into it, he that is greedy of gain troubles his own house; and, which is worse, it brings the curse of God upon it, and upon all the affairs of it. *Woe to him that gaineth an evil gain*, so the margin reads it: There is a lawful gain, which by the blessing of God may be a comfort to a house, a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children; but what is got by fraud and injustice is ill got, and will be ill gain, will not only do no good to a family, but will bring poverty and ruin upon it. Now observe,

(1.) What this covetous wretch aims at; it is *to set his nest on high*, to raise his family to some greater dignity than it had before arrived to; or to set it, as he apprehends, out of the reach of danger, that he may be delivered from the power of evil; that it may not be in the power of the worst of his enemies to do him a mischief, or so much as to disturb his repose. Note, It is common for men to pretend it as an excuse for their covetousness and ambition, that they only consult their own safety, and aim to secure themselves: And yet they do but deceive themselves, when they think their wealth will be a strong city to them and a high wall, for it is so only in their own conceit, Prov. xviii. 10.

(2.) What he will get by it. *Thou hast consulted, not safety, but shame to thy house by cutting off many people*, ver. 10. Note, An estate raised by iniquity is a scandal to a family. Those that cut off, or undermine others to make room for themselves, do but consult shame to their houses, and fasten upon them a mark of infamy. Yet that is not the worst of it, *thou hast sinned against thine own soul*, hath brought that under guilt and wrath, and endangered that. Note, Those that do wrong to their neighbours, do much greater wrong to their own souls. But if the sinner pleads not guilty, and thinks he has managed his frauds and violence with so much art and contrivance that they cannot be proved upon him; let him know, that if there be no other witness against him, *the stone shall cry out of the wall against him*, and the beams out of the timber in the roof shall accuse it, shall second it, shall witness it, that the money and materials wherewith he built the house were unjustly gotten, ver. 10. The stones and timber cry to heaven for vengeance, as the whole creation groans under the sin of man, and waits to be delivered from that bondage of corruption.

3. Here is a woe against him for building a town and city by blood and extortion, ver. 12. He builds a town, and is himself lord of it, he establishes a city, and makes it his royal seat: so Nebuchadnezzar did, Dan. iv. 33. Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom? But it is built with the blood of his own subjects whom he has oppressed, and the blood of his neighbours, whom he hath unjustly invaded; it is established by iniquity, by the unrighteous laws that are made for the security of it; *Woe to him that doth so; for the towns and cities thus built can never be established, they will fall, and their founders be buried in the ruins of them.* Babylon that was built by blood and iniquity did not continue long, its day soon came to fall; and then this woe took effect, which that prophecy which is expressed as a history, (Isa. xxi. 9. proveth a history indeed), *Babylon is fallen, is fallen.* And the destruction of that city was,

1. The shame of the Chaldeans, who had taken so much pains, and were at such vast expence to fortify it, ver. 13. *Is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people, who have laboured so hard to defend that city, shall labour in the very fire*, shall see the outworks which they confided in the strength of set on fire, and shall labour in vain to save them? Or they in their pursuits of worldly wealth and honour put themselves to a great fatigue, and ran a mighty hazard as they that labour in the fire do. The worst that can be said of the labourers in God's vineyard is, that they have borne the burden and heat of the day, Matt. xx. 12. but those that are eager in their worldly pursuits labour in the very fire, make themselves perfect slaves to their lusts. There is not a greater drudge in the world, than he that is under the power of reigning covetousness. And what comes of it? Though they take a world of pains, they are but poorly paid for it; for after all, they weary themselves for very vanity; they were told it was vanity, and when they find themselves disappointed of it, and disappointed in it, they will own it is worse than vanity, it is *exaction of spirit*.

2. It was the honour of God, as a God of impartial justice and irresistible power; for by the ruin of the Chaldean monarchy (which all the world

could not but take notice of) the earth was filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, ver. 14. The Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth; especially when he is pleased to look upon proud men and abate them, for he thereby proves himself to be God alone, Job. xl. 11, 12. See what good God brings out of this staining and sinking of earthly glory, he thereby manifests and magnifies his own glory, and fills the earth with the knowledge of it as plentifully as the waters cover the sea, which lie deep, spread far, and shall not be dried up until time shall be no more. Such is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, given by the gospel, 2 Cor. iv. 6. and such was the knowledge of his glory by the miraculous ruin of Babylon. Note, Such as will not be taught the knowledge of God's glory by the judgments of his mouth, shall be made to know and acknowledge it by the judgments of his hand.

15. ¶ Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink: that putteth the bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness. 16. Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory. 17. For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee: and the spoil of beasts which made them afraid because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. 18. ¶ What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein to make him dumb idols? 19. Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach; behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. 20. But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

The three foregoing articles, upon which the woes are here grounded, are very near a kin to each other: The criminals charged by them are oppressors and extortioners, that raise estates by rapine and injustice, and it is mentioned here again, ver. 17. the very same that was said, ver. 8. for that is the crime upon which the greatest stress is laid, it is *because of men's blood*, innocent blood, barbarously and unjustly shed, which is a provoking crying thing; it is for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein, which God will certainly reckon for sooner or later, as the avenger of right and the avenger of wrong.

But here are two articles more of a different nature which carry a woe, to all those in general to whom they belong, and particularly to the Babylonian monarchs, by whom the people of God were taken and held captives.

1. The promoters of drunkenness stand here impeached and condemned. Belshazzar was one of those, he was so remarkably that very night that the prophecy of this chapter was fulfilled in the period of his life and kingdom, when he drank wine before a thousand of his lords, Dan. v. 1. began the healths and forced them to pledge him. And perhaps it was one reason why the succeeding monarchs of Persia made it a law of their kingdom, that in drinking none should compel, but they should do according to every man's pleasure, as we find, Esth. i. 8. because they had seen in the kings of Babylon the mischievous consequence of forcing healths and making people drunk. But the woe here stands firm and very fearful against all those, whoever they be, that at any time are guilty of this sin; and in any place from the stately palace (where that was) to the paltry ale-house. Observe,

(1.) Who the sinner is that is here articulated against; it is he that makes his neighbour drunk, ver. 15. To give a neighbour drink that is in want, that is thirsty and poor, though it be but a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple; to give drink to a weary traveller; nay, and to give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to them that are of heavy heart, is a piece of charity which is required of us, and shall be recompensed to us; *I was thirsty and you gave me drink*; But to give a neighbour drink that has enough already, and more than enough, with a design to intoxicate him, that he may expose himself, may talk foolishly and make himself ridiculous, may disclose his own privacies, or be drawn in to agree to an ill bargain for himself; this is abominable wickedness, and those that are guilty of it, that make a practice of it, and take a pride and pleasure in it, are rebels against God in heaven, and his sacred laws, factors for the devil in hell and his cursed interest, and enemies to men on earth, and their honour and welfare: They are like the son of Nebat that sinned and made Israel to sin. To entice others to drunkenness, to put the bottle to them that they may be allured by its charms, by looking on the wine when it is red, and gives its colour in the cup, or to force them to it, obliging them by the rules of the club (and club-laws indeed they are) to drink so many glasses, and so filled, is to do what we can, and perhaps more than we know of, towards the murder both of soul and body: and those that do so have a great deal to answer for.

(2.) What the sentence is that is here passed upon him. There is a woe to him, ver. 15. and a punishment, ver. 16. that shall answer the sin. (1.) Doth he put the cup of drunkenness into the hand of his neighbour? the cup of fury, the cup of trembling, the cup of the Lord's right hand, shall be turned unto him; the power of God shall be armed against him: That cup which had gone round among the nations to make them a desolation, an astonishment and a hissing, which had made them stumble and fall so that they could rise no more, shall at length be put into the hand of the king of Babylon, as was foretold, Jer. xxv. 15, 16—18—26, 27. Thus the New Testament Babylon, which had made the nations drunk with the cup of her fornications, shall have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, Rev. xviii. 3—6. (2.) Doth he take a pleasure in putting his neighbour to shame; He shall himself be loaded with contempt; *Thou art filled with shame for glory*, with shame instead of glory, or art filled now with shame more than ever thou wast with glory; and the glory thou hast been filled with shall but serve to make thy shame the more grievous to thyself, and the more ignominious in the eyes of others. Thou also shalt drink of the cup of trembling; and shalt expose thyself by thy fear and cowardice, which shall be, as the uncovering of thy nakedness to thy shame; and all about thee shall load thee with disgrace, for shameful spewing shall be on thy glory; on that which thou hast most prided thyself in, thy dignity, wealth and dominion; those whom thou hast made drunk, shall themselves spew upon it. For ver. 17. the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, i. e. thou shalt be hunted and run down with as much violence as ever any wild beasts in Lebanon were, shalt be spoiled as they are, and thy fall made a sport of; for thou art as one of the beasts that made them afraid, and therefore they triumph when



when they have got the mastery of thee. Or, It is because of the violence thou hast done to Lebanon, i. e. the land of Israel, Deut. iii. 25. and the temple. Zech. xi. 1. that God now reckens with thee; that is the sin that now covers thee.

2. The promoters of idolatry stand here impeached and condemned; and this also was a sin that Babylon was notoriously guilty of; it was the mother of harlots; Belshazzar in his revels praised his idols. And for this here is a vow against them, and in them against all others that do likewise, particularly the New Testament Babylon. Now see here,

1. What they do to promote idolatry, they are mad upon their idols, so the Chaldeans are said to be, Jer. l. 38. For, (1.) They have a great variety of idols, their graven images, and molten images, that people may take their choice which they like best. (2.) They are very nice and curious in the framing of them, the maker of the work has played his part admirably well, the fashioner of his fashion, so it is in the margin, that contrived the model in the most significant manner. (3.) They are at a great expence in beautifying and adorning them, they lay them over with gold and silver, because they are things people love and dote upon wherever they meet with them; they dress up their idols in them, the more effectually to court the adoration of the children of this world. (4.) They have great expectations from them. The maker of the work trusteth therein as his gods, puts a confidence in it, and gives honour to it as his god. The worshippers of God give honour to him, by offering up their prayers to him, and waiting to receive instructions and directions from him; and these honours they give to their idols, (1.) They pray to them, they say to the wood, Awake for our relief, awake to hear our prayers; and to the dumb stone, Arise, and save us, as the church prays to her God, Awake, O Lord, arise, Psalm xlv. 23. They own their image to be a god by praying to it. Deliver me, for thou art my God, Isa. xlv. 17. Deos qui rogat ille facit. (2.) They consult them as oracles, and expect to be directed and dictated by them; they say to the dumb stone, though it cannot speak; yet it shall teach. When the wicked demon, or no less wicked priest speaks to them from the image, they receive with the utmost veneration, as of divine authority, and are ready to be governed by it. Thus is idolatry planted and propagated under the specious shew of religion and devotion.

2. How the extreme folly of this is exposed. God by Isaiah, when he foretold the deliverance of his people out of Babylon, largely shewed the shameful stupidity and sottishness of idolaters, and so he doth here by the prophet on the like occasion. (1.) Their images when they have made them are but mere matter, which is the meanest lowest rank of being, and all the expence they are at upon them, cannot advance them one step above that; they are wholly void both of sense and reason, lifeless and speechless: it is a dumb idol, a dumb stone, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it, so that the most minute animal that has but breath and motion is more excellent than they. They have not so much as the spirit of a beast. (2.) It is not in their power to do their worshippers any good, ver. 8. What profiteth the graven image? Though it be mere matter, if it were cast into some other form it might be serviceable to some purpose or other of human life, but as it is made a god of, it is of no profit at all, nor can do its worshippers the least kindness. Nay, (3.) It is so far from profiting them, that it puts a cheat upon them, and keeps them under the power of a strong delusion; they say, it shall teach, but it is a teacher of lies; for it represents God as having a body, as being finite, visible and dependent; where as he is a spirit, infinite, invisible, and independent; and confirms those that become vain in their imaginations in the false notions they have of God, and makes the idea of God to be a precarious thing, and what every man pleaseth; if we may say to the works of our hands ye are gods, we may say so to any of the creatures of our own fancy, though the chimera be never so extravagant. An image is a doctrine of vanities, it is falsehood, and a work of error, Jer. x. 8—13—15. It is therefore easy to see what their religion is, and what they aim at, who recommend those teachers of lies as laymen's books, which they are to study and govern themselves by, when they have locked up from them the book of the scriptures in an unknown tongue.

3. How the people of God triumph in him, and therewith support themselves when the idolaters thus shame themselves, ver. 20. But the Lord is in his holy temple. (1.) Our rock is not as their rock, Deut. xxxii. 31. Theirs are dumb idols, ours is Jehovah, a living God, that is what he is, and not as theirs what men please to make him. He is in his holy temple in heaven, the residence of his glory, where we have access to him in the way, not which we have invented, but which he himself hath instituted. Compare Psalm cxv. 3. But our God is in the heavens, Psalm xi. 4. (2.) The multitude of their gods which they set up, and take so much pains to support, cannot thrust out our God, he is, and will be in his holy temple still, and glorious in holiness. They have laid waste his temple at Jerusalem, but he has a temple above, that is out of the reach of their rage and malice, but within the reach of his people's faith and prayers. (3.) Our God will make all the world silent before him; will strike the idolaters dumb as their idols, convicting them of their folly, and covering them with shame. He will silence the fury of the oppressors, and check their rage against his people. (4.) It is the duty of his people to attend him with silent adorings, Psalm lxxv. 1. and patiently wait for his appearing to save them in his own way and time. Be still and know that he is God, Zech. ii. 13.

### C H A P. III.

Still the correspondence is kept up between God and his prophet. In the first chapter he spoke to God, then God to him, and then he to God again: in the second chapter, God spoke wholly to him by the Spirit of prophecy; now, in this chapter, he speaks wholly to God by the spirit of prayer; for he would not let the intercourse drop on his side, like a genuine son of Abraham, who returned not to his place until God had left communing with him, Gen. xviii. 33. The prophet's prayer in this chapter is in imitation of David's Psalms, for it is directed to the chief musician, and is set to musical instruments. The prayer is left upon record for the use of the church, and particularly of the Jews in their captivity, while they were waiting for their deliverance, promised by the vision in the foregoing chapter. (1.) He earnestly begs of God to relieve and succour his people in affliction, to hasten their deliverance, and to comfort them in the mean time, ver. 2. (2.) He calls to mind the experiences which the church formerly had of God's glorious and gracious appearances on her behalf, when he brought Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness to Canaan, and there many a time wrought wonderful salvations for them, ver. 3—15. (4.) He affects himself with a holy concern for the present troubles of the church, but encourageth himself and others to hope that the issue will be comfortable and glorious at last, though all visible means fail, ver. 16—19.

1. A PRAYER of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. 2. O LORD, I have heard thy speech and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the

midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

This chapter is entitled a prayer of Habakkuk, it is a meditation with himself, an intercession for the church. Prophets were praying men; this prophet was so. He is a prophet and he shall pray for thee, Gen. xx. 7. and sometimes they prayed for those even whom they prophesied against. They that were intimately acquainted with the mind of God concerning future events, knew better than others how to order their prayers, and what to pray for, and in the foresight of troublous times, could lay up a stock of prayers that might then receive a gracious answer, and so be serving the church by their prayers when their prophesying was over. This prophet had found God ready to answer his requests and complaints before, and therefore now repeats his applications to him. Because God hath inclined his ear to us, we must resolve that therefore we will call upon him as long as we live.

1. The prophet owns the receipt of God's answer to his former representation, and the impression it made upon him, ver. 2. O Lord, I have heard thy speech, thy hearing, so some read it, that which thou wouldst have us hear, the decree that is gone forth for the afflicting of thy people: I received thine, and it is before me. Note, Those that would rightly order their speech to God, must carefully observe and lay before them his speech to them. He had said, chap. ii. 1. I will watch to see what he will say, and now he owns, Lord, I have heard thy speech; for if we turn a deaf ear to God's word we can expect no other but that he should turn a deaf ear to our prayers, Prov. xviii. 9. I heard it, and was afraid. Messias immediately from heaven, commonly struck even the best and boldest men into a consternation; Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel, did exceedingly fear and quake: but besides that, the matter of this message made the prophet afraid, when he heard how low the people of God should be brought under the oppressing power of the Chaldeans, and how long they should continue under it; he was afraid lest their spirit should quite fail, and lest the church should be utterly rooted out and run down, and being kept low so long, should be lost at length.

2. He earnestly prays that, for the elect's sake, these days of trouble might be shortened, or the trouble of these days mitigated and moderated, or the people of God supported and comforted under it. He thinks it very long to wait till the end of the years, perhaps he refers to the seventy years fixed for the continuance of the captivity, and therefore, Lord, (said he) do something on our behalf in the midst of the years, those years of our distress; though we be not delivered, and our oppressors destroyed, yet let us not be abandoned and cast off. (1.) Do something for thine own cause; revive thy work, i. e. thy church, that is the work of God's own hand, formed by him, formed for him, revive that, even when it walks in the midst of trouble, Plal. cxxxviii. 7, 8. Grant thy people a little reviving in their bondage, Ezra ix. 8. Psalm lxxxv. 6. Preserve alive thy work, so some read it, though thy church be chastened, let it not be killed, though it have not its liberty, yet continue its life, save a remnant alive to be a seed of another generation. Revive the work of thy grace in us, by sanctifying the trouble to us, and supporting us under it, though the time be not yet come, even the set time for our deliverance out of it; whatever becomes of us, though we be as dead and dry bones, Lord, let the work be revived, let not that sink and go back, and come to nothing. (2.) Do something for thine own honour? in the midst of the years make known, make thyself known, for now verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, Isa. xlv. 15. make known thy power, thy pity, thy promise, thy providence in the government of the world, for the safety and welfare of thy church. Though we be buried in obscurity, yet, Lord, make thyself known; whatever becomes of Israel, let not the God of Israel be forgotten in the world, but discover himself even in the midst of the dark years, before thou art expected to appear. When in the midst of the years of the captivity, God miraculously owned the three children in the fiery furnace, and humbled Nebuchadnezzar, this prayer was answered, in the midst of the year made known. (3.) Do something for thy people's comfort; in wrath remember mercy, and make that known: shew us thy mercy, O Lord, Psalm lxxxv. 7. They see God's displeasure against them in their troubles, and that makes them grievous indeed, there is wrath in the bitter cup, that therefore they deprecate, and are earnest in begging, that in the midst of wrath, God would remember mercy to them, would make it appear that he is a merciful God, and they are vessels of his mercy. Note, Even those that are under the tokens of God's wrath yet must not despair of his mercy; and mercy, mere mercy is that which we must flee to for refuge, and rely upon as our only plea. He doth not say, remember our merit, but, Lord, remember thy own mercy.

3. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. 5. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. 6. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. 7. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 8. Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation? 9. Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. 10. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lift up his hands on high. 11. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear. 12. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. 13. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed: thou woundest the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah. 14. Thou didst strike



strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. 15. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.

It has been the usual practice of God's people, when they have been in distress and ready to fall into despair, to help themselves by recollecting their experiences, and reviving them, *considering the days of old, and the years of ancient times*, Psal. lxxvii. 5. and pleading them with God in prayer, as he is pleased sometimes to plead them with himself, *Isa. lxiii. 11. Then he remembered the days of old.* This is that which the prophet doth here, and he looks as far back as the first forming them into a people, when they were brought by miracles out of Egypt, *a house of bondage*, through the wilderness, *a land of drought*, into Canaan, then possessed by *mighty nations*; he that thus brought them at first into Canaan through so much difficulty, can now bring them thither again out of Babylon how great soever the difficulties are that lie in the way. Those works of wonders wrought of old are here most magnificently described, for the greater encouragement of the faith of God's people in their present straits.

1. God appeared in his glory, so as he never did before or since, *ver. 3. 4. He came from Temun, even the Holy One from mount Paran*; this refers to the visible display of the glory of God, when he gave the law upon mount Sinai, as appears by *Deut. xxxiii. 2.* whence these expressions are borrowed; then *the Lord came down* upon mount Sinai in a cloud, *Exod. xix. 20.* and his glory was as the *deavouring fire*; not only to enforce the law he then gave them, but to *avow* the deliverance he had wrought for them, and to *magnify* it, for the first word that he said there was, *I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt*: 1 that appear in this glory, and the author of that work. Then *his glory covered the heavens*, which shone with the reflection of that glorious appearance of his; *the earth also was full of his praise*, or of his *splendor*, as some read it. People at a distance saw the cloud and fire on the top of mount Sinai, and *praised* the God of Israel, or the earth was full of those works of God which were to be *praised*. His *brightness was as the light*, as the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength, *he had horns or bright beams*, (so it should be rendered) *coming out of his side or hand*; rays of glory were darted forth around him; and with some rays borrowed thence, it was that Moses's face shone when he came down from that mount of glory. Some by the horns, the two horns (for the word is dual) *coming out of his hand*, understand the two tables of the law, which perhaps when God delivered them to Moses, though they were tables of stone, had a glory round them, these books were gilt with beams, and so it agrees with *Deut. xxxiii. 2. From his right hand went a fiery law for them.* It is added, *and there was the hiding of his power*, i. e. there was his hidden power, in the rays that came out of his hand; the operations of his power, compared with what he could have done, were rather the *hiding* of it than the *discovery* of it; the *secrets* of his power as well as of his wisdom, are double to that which is, *Job xi. 6.*

2. God sent plagues on Egypt, for the humbling of proud Pharaoh, and the obliging of him to let the people go, *ver. 5. Before him went the pestilence*, which slew all the first-born of Egypt in one night, and *burning coals went forth at his feet*, when in the plague of hail there was *re mingled with hail*; *burning diseases*, so the margin reads it, some think, those that wasted Egypt; others, those with which the number of the Canaanites was diminished before Israel was brought in upon them. These were *at his feet*, i. e. at his coming, for they are at his command, he saith to them go, and they go, come, and they come, do this, and they do it.

3. He divided the land of Canaan to his people Israel, and expelled the heathen from before them, *ver. 6. He stood and measured the earth*, measured that land to assign it for an inheritance to Israel his people, *Deut. xxxii. 8. 9. He beheld, and drove asunder the nations* that were in possession of it, though they combined together against Israel, God dispersed and discomfited them before Israel. Or, he exerted such a mighty power as was enough to shake in pieces all the nations of the earth. Then *the everlasting mountains were scattered*, and the *perpetual hills did bow*, the mighty princes and potentates of Canaan, that seemed as high, as strong, and as firmly fixed as the mountains and hills, were broken to pieces, they and their kingdoms were totally subdued. Or, the power of God was so exerted, as to have shook the mountains and hills, nay, and Sinai did tremble, and the adjacent hills, see *Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8.* To this he adds, *his ways are everlasting*, i. e. All the motions of his providence are according to his eternal counsels; and he is the same for ever that which he was yesterday and to-day. His covenant is unchangeable, and his *mercy endures for ever*. When he *drove asunder the nations of Canaan*, one might have seen the *tents of Cushan in affliction*, and the *curtains of the land of Median trembling*; all the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries taking the alarm, and though they were not in the commission given to Israel to destroy, nor their land within the warrant given to Israel to possess, yet they thought their own house in danger, when their neighbour's house was on fire, and therefore they were in a great fright, *ver. 7. Balak the king of Moab was so*, *Numb. xxii. 3, 4.* Some make the tents of Cushan to be in *affliction*, when in the days of judge Othniel, God delivered Cushan-rishathaim into his hand, *Judges iii. 8.* And the *curtains of the land of Median to tremble*, when in the days of judge Gideon, a barley cake in a dream overthrew the tent of Midian, *Judges vii. 13.*

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6. He carried on and completed Israel's victories over the nations of Canaan, and their kings, *slew great kings and famous*, *Psal. cxxxvi. 17, 18.* This is largely insisted upon here, as a proper plea with God, to enforce petitions, that he would restore them again to that land, which they were, at the expense of so many lives, so many miracles, first put in possession of. Many expressions are here used to set forth the conquest of Canaan. (1.) *God's bow was made quite naked*, taken out of the case to be employed for Israel; we would say, his sword was quite unsheathed, not drawn out a little way to frighten the enemy, and then put up again; but quite drawn out, not to be returned till they are all cut off. (2.) *He marched through the land from end to end, in indignation*, as *scorning* to let that wicked generation of Canaanites any longer possess so good a land. He marched *cum fastidio* so some; despising their confederacies. (3.) *He threshed the heathen in anger*; trod them down, nay he trod them out, as corn in the floor; to give them and what they had, to be meat to his people Israel, *Mic. iv. 13.* (4.) *He wounded the heads of the house of the wicked*, i. e. he destroyed the families of the Canaanites, and wounded their princes, the heads of their families, nay, he cut off the heads, and so *discovered the foundations of them, even to the neck*. Are they a building? They are razed even to the foundation: Are they a body? They are plunged in deep mire even to the neck, so that they cannot get out or help themselves. He *brake the heads of Leviathan in pieces*, *Psal. lxxiv. 14.* Some apply this to Christ's victories over Satan, and the powers of darkness, in which he *wounded the heads over many countries*, *Psal. cx. 6.* (5.) *He struck through with his staves, the head of the villages*, *ver. 14.* with Israel's staves God struck through the head of the villages of the enemies, whether Egypt or Canaan. Staves shall do the same execution as swords, when God pleaseth to make use of them. The enemy came out with the utmost force and fury, *as a whirlwind to scatter me* (saith Israel) *for many a time have they thus afflicted me*, thus attacked me from my youth, *Psal. cxix. 1.* Pharaoh, when he pursued Israel to the Red-sea, came out as a whirlwind; so did the kings of Canaan in the confederacies against Israel: *Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly*, i. e. they were as confident of success in their enterprise, as ever any great man was of devouring a poor man, that was no way a match for him, and his design against him was carried on with secrecy. But God disappointed them, and their pride did but make their fall the more shameful, and God's care of his poor the more illustrious. (6.) *He walked to the sea with his horses*, so some read it, *ver. 15.* i. e. he carried Israel's victory to the great sea which was opposite to that side of Canaan at which they entered; so that they went quite through it, and made themselves masters of it all; or rather God made them so, for they got it not by their own sword, *Psal. cxli. 3.*

Now there were three things that God had an eye to, in giving Israel so many bloody victories over the Canaanites. (1.) He would hereby make good his promise to the fathers, it was according to the oaths of the tribes, *even his word*, *ver. 9.* he had sworn to give this land to the tribes of Israel; it was his oath to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob, and repeated many a time to the tribes of Israel, *unto thee will I give the land of Canaan.* This word God will accomplish, though Israel be never so unworthy, *Deut. ix. 5.* and their enemies never so many and mighty. Note, That God doth for his tribes according to what he hath said and sworn to them, for he is faithful that promised. (2.) He would hereby shew his kindness to his people, because of their relation to him, and his interest in them, *Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people*, *ver. 13.* All the powers of nature are shaken and the course of nature changed, and every thing seems to be thrown into disorder, and all is for the salvation of God's people. There is a people in the world that are God's people, and their salvation is that which he has in his eye in all the operations of his providence, heaven and earth shall sooner come together than any of the links in the golden chain of their salvation shall be broken; and even that which seems most unlikely, shall by an over-ruling hand be made to work for their salvation, *Phil. i. 19.* (3.) He would hereby give a type and figure of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. It is for salvation with thine anointed, with Joshua who led the armies of Israel, and was a figure of him, whose name he bore, even Jesus our Joshua. What God did for his Israel of old, was done with an eye to his anointed, for the sake of the Mediator, who was both the founder and foundation of the covenant made with them. It was salvation with him, for in all the salvations wrought for them, God looked upon the face of the anointed, and did them by him.

16. When I heard my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. 17. Although the



the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. 18. Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19. The Lord GOD is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief finger on my stringed instruments.

Within the compass of these few lines we have the prophet in the highest degree, both of *trembling* and *triumphing*; such are the varieties both of the state and the spirit of God's people in this world. In heaven there shall be no more trembling but everlasting triumphs.

1. The prophet had foreseen the prevalency of the church's enemies, and the long continuance of the church's troubles, and the sight made him tremble, ver. 16. This goes on with what he had said, ver. 2. *I have heard thy speech and was afraid; when I heard what sad times were coming upon the church, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice:* The news made such an impression, that it put me into a perfect ague-fit, the blood retiring to the heart to succour that when it was ready to faint, the extreme parts were left destitute of spirits, so that *his lips quivered*. Nay, he was so weak and unable to help himself, that he was as if *rottenness had entered into his bones*, he had no strength left in him, could neither stand nor go, he *trembled in himself*, trembled all over him, trembled within him; he yielded to his trembling, and *troubled himself*, as our Saviour did, *his flesh trembled for fear of God*, and he was afraid of his judgments, Psal. cxix. 120. He was touched with a tender concern for the calamities of the church, and trembled for fear lest they should end at length in its ruin; and that the name of Israel would be blotted out. Nor did he think it any disparagement to him, or a reproach to his courage, but freely owned he was one of those that trembled at God's word, for to them he will look with favour; *I tremble in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble*. Note, When we see a day of trouble approaching, it concerns us to provide accordingly, and to lay up something in store by the help of which we may rest in that day; and the best way to make sure rest for ourselves in the day of trouble, is to tremble within ourselves at the word of God, and the threatenings of that word. He that has joy in store for them that *sow in tears*, has rest in store for them that tremble before him, Good hope through grace is founded in a holy fear: Noah that was moved with fear, and trembled within himself at the warning given him of the deluge coming, had the ark for his resting place in the day of that trouble. The prophet tells us what he said in his trembling: his fear was, *when he cometh up to the people*, when the Chaldean comes up to the people of Israel he will invade them, will surround them, will break in upon them, nay, as it is in the margin, he will cut them in pieces with his troops; he cried out, we are all undone, the whole nation of the Jews is lost and gone. Note, When things look bad, we are too apt to aggravate them, and make the worst of them.

2. He had looked back upon the experiences of the church in former ages, and had observed what great things God had done for them, and so he recovered himself out of his fright; and not only retrieved his temper, but fell into a transport of holy joy, with an express *non obstante* to the calamities he foresaw coming, and this, not for himself only, but in the name of every faithful Israelite.

1. He supposeth the ruin of all his creature-comforts and enjoyments, not only of the delights of this life, but even of the necessary supports of it, ver. 17. Famine is one of the ordinary effects of war, and those commonly feel it first and most that sit still and are quiet; the prophet and his

pious friends, when the Chaldean army comes, will be plundered and stripped of all they have. Or he supposeth himself deprived of all by blasting and unseasonable weather, or some other immediate hand of God. Or though the captives in Babylon have not that plenty of all good things in their own land. (1.) He supposeth the fruit-tree to be withered and become barren; the fig-tree, (which used to furnish them with much of their food, hence we often read of *cakes of figs*) shall not so much as blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; from which they had their drink that made glad the heart: Suppose the labour of the olive should fail, their oil which was to them as butter is to us; the labour of the olive shall fail, so it is in the margin, their expectations from it shall be disappointed. (2.) He supposeth the bread-corn to fail; the fields shall yield no meat, and since the king himself is served of the field, if the product of that be withdrawn, every one will feel the want of them. (3.) He supposeth the cattle to perish, either for want of the food which the field should yield and doth not, or by disease, or being destroyed and carried away by the enemy, the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stall. Note, When we are in the full enjoyment of our creature-comforts we should consider that there may come a time when we shall be stripped of them all, and use them accordingly, as not abusing them, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.

2. He resolves to delight and triumph in God notwithstanding; when all is gone, his God is not gone, ver. 18. Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I shall have him to rejoice in, and will rejoice in him. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, Hos. ii. 11, 12. But those who, when they were full, enjoyed God in all, when they are emptied and impoverished can enjoy all in God; and can sit down upon a melancholy heap of the ruins of all their creature-comforts, and even then can sing to the praise and glory of God, as the God of their salvation. This is the principal ground of our joy in God, that he is the God of our salvation, our eternal salvation, the salvation of the soul: and if he be so, we may rejoice in him as such in our greatest distresses, since by them our salvation cannot be hindered, but may be furthered. Note, Joy in God is never out of season, nay, it is in a special manner seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world, that it may then appear our hearts are not set upon these things, nor our happiness bound up in them. See how the prophet triumphs in God, The Lord God is my strength, ver. 18. He that is the God of our salvation in another world, will be our strength in this world, to carry us on in our journey thither, and help us over the difficulties and oppositions we meet with in our way. Even then when provisions are cut off, to make it appear that man lives not by bread alone, we may have the want of bread supplied by the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, and with the supplies of them. (1.) We shall be strong for our spiritual warfare and work; The Lord God is my strength, the strength of my heart. (2.) We shall be swift for our spiritual race, he will make my feet like hinds feet, that with enlargement of heart I may run the way of his commands and out-run my troubles. (3.) We shall be successful in our spiritual enterprises, he will make me to walk upon my high places, i. e. I shall gain my point, shall be restored unto my own land, and tread upon the high places of the enemy, Deut. xxxii.—xxxiii. 29. Thus the prophet that began his prayer with fear and trembling, concludes it with joy and triumph; for prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul. When Hannah had prayed, she went away and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. This prophet finding it so, publisheth his experience of it, and puts it into the hand of the chief finger for the use of the church, especially in the day of her captivity. And though then the harps were hung upon the willow trees, yet in hopes they would be resumed, and their right hand retrieve its cunning, which it had forgot, he set his song upon Shigionoth, ver. 1. wandering tunes according to the variable songs, and upon Neginoth, ver. 19, the stringed instruments. He that is afflicted and has prayed aright, may then be so easy, may then be so merry as to sing psalms.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET HABAKKUK.

# AN EXPOSITION,

## WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

# ZEPHANIAH.

This prophet is placed last, as he was last in time of all the minor prophets before the captivity, and not long before Jeremiah, who lived at the time of the captivity. He foretells the general destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and lets their sins in order before them; which had provoked God to bring their ruin upon them; calls them to repentance; threatens the neighbour nations with the like destructions, and gives encouraging promises of their joyful return out of captivity in due time, which have a reference to the grace of the gospel. We have in the first verse an account of the prophet and the date of his prophecy, which supercedes our enquiry concerning them here.

### CHAP. I.

After the title of the book, ver. 1. here is, (1.) A threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, an utter destruction by the Chaldeans, ver. 2—4. (2.) A charge against them for their gross sins, which provoked God to bring that destruction upon them, ver. 5, 6. and so he goes on in the rest of the chapter, setting both the judgments before them, that they might prevent them or prepare for them; and the

sins that destroy them, that they might judge themselves, and justify God in what was brought upon them. (1.) They must hold their peace because they had greatly sinned, ver. 7—9. But (2.) They shall howl because the trouble will be great. The day of the Lord is near, and it will be a terrible day, ver. 10—18. Such fair and timely warning as this did God give to the Jews of the approaching captivity, but they hardened their neck, which made their destruction remediless.



strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. 15. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.

It has been the usual practice of God's people, when they have been in distress and ready to fall into despair, to help themselves by recollecting their experiences, and reviving them, *considering the days of old, and the years of ancient times*, Psal. lxxvii. 5. and pleading them with God in prayer, as he is pleased sometimes to plead them with himself, *Isa. lxiii. 11. Then he remembered the days of old.* This is that which the prophet doth here, and he looks as far back as the first forming them into a people, when they were brought by miracles out of Egypt, *a house of bondage*, through the wilderness, *a land of drought*, into Canaan, then possessed by *mighty nations*; he that thus brought them at first into Canaan through so much difficulty, can now bring them thither again out of Babylon how great soever the difficulties are that lie in the way. Those works of wonders wrought of old are here most magnificently described, for the greater encouragement of the faith of God's people in their present straits.

1. God appeared in his glory, so as he never did before or since, *ver. 3. 4. He came from Teman, even the Holy One from mount Paran*; this refers to the visible display of the glory of God, when he gave the law upon mount Sinai, as appears by *Deut. xxxiii. 2.* whence these expressions are borrowed; then *the Lord came down upon mount Sinai in a cloud*, *Exod. xix. 20.* and his glory was *as the devouring fire*; not only to enforce the law he then gave them, but to *avow* the deliverance he had wrought for them, and to *magnify* it, for the first word that he said there was, *I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt*: 1 that appear in this glory, and the author of that work. Then *his glory covered the heavens*, which shone with the reflection of that glorious appearance of his; *the earth also was full of his praise*, or of his *splendor*, as some read it. People at a distance saw the cloud and fire on the top of mount Sinai, and *praised the God of Israel*, or the *earth was full of those works of God which were to be praised*. His *brightness was as the light*, as the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength, *he had horns or bright beams*, (so it should be rendered) *coming out of his side or hand*; rays of glory were darted forth around him; and with some rays borrowed thence, it was that Moses's face shone when he came down from that mount of glory. Some by the horns, the *two horns* (for the word is dual) *coming out of his hand*, understand the *two tables of the law*, which perhaps when God delivered them to Moses, though they were tables of stone, had a glory round them, these books were gilt with beams, and so it agrees with *Deut. xxxiii. 2. From his right hand went a fiery law for them*. It is added, *and there was the hiding of his power*, i. e. there was his hidden power, in the rays that came out of his hand; the operations of his power, compared with what he could have done, were rather the *hiding* of it than the *discovery* of it; the *secrets of his power* as well as of his wisdom, are double to that which is, *Job xi. 6.*

2. God sent plagues on Egypt, for the humbling of proud Pharaoh, and the obliging of him to let the people go, *ver. 5. Before him went the pestilence*, which slew all the first-born of Egypt in one night, and *burning coals went forth at his feet*, when in the plague of hail there was *re mingled with hail*; *burning diseases*, so the margin reads it, some think, those that wasted Egypt; others, those with which the number of the Canaanites was diminished before Israel was brought in upon them. These were *at his feet*, i. e. at his coming, for they are at his command, he saith to them go, and they go, come, and they come, do this, and they do it.

5. He divided the land of Canaan to his people Israel, and expelled the heathen from before them, *ver. 6. He stood and measured the earth*, measured that land to assign it for an inheritance to Israel his people, *Deut. xxxii. 8. 9. He beheld, and drove asunder the nations* that were in possession of it, though they combined together against Israel, God dispersed and discomfited them before Israel. Or, he exerted such a mighty power as was enough to shake in pieces all the nations of the earth. Then *the everlasting mountains were scattered*, and *the perpetual hills did bow*, the mighty princes and potentates of Canaan, that seemed as high as strong, and as firmly fixed as the mountains and hills, were broken to pieces, they and their kingdoms were totally subdued. Or, the power of God was so exerted, as to have shook the mountains and hills, nay, and Sinai did tremble, and the adjacent hills, see *Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8.* To this he adds, *his ways are everlasting*, i. e. All the motions of his providence are according to his eternal counsels; and he is the same for ever that which he was yesterday and to-day. His covenant is unchangeable, and his *mercy endures for ever*. When he *drove asunder the nations of Canaan*, one might have seen the *tents of Cushan in affliction*, and the *curtains of the land of Median trembling*; all the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries taking the alarm, and though they were not in the commission given to Israel to destroy, nor their land within the warrant given to Israel to possess, yet they thought their own house in danger, when their neighbour's house was on fire, and therefore they were in a great fright, *ver. 7. Balak the king of Moab was so*, *Numb. xxii. 3, 4.* Some make the tents of Cushan to be in *affliction*, when in the days of judge Othniel, God delivered Cushan-rishathaim into his hand, *Judges iii. 8.* And the *curtains of the land of Median to tremble*, when in the days of judge Gideon, a barley cake in a dream overthrew the tent of Midian, *Judges vii. 13.*

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So here, *Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers*, i. e. channels were made in the wilderness, such as seemed to cleave the earth, for the waters to run in that issued out of the rock, to supply the camp of Israel, and which followed them in all their removes. Note, The God of nature can alter and controul the powers of nature which way he pleaseth, can turn waters into crystal rocks and rocks into crystal streams.

5. He arrested the motion of the sun and moon to besfriend and complete Israel's victories, *ver. 11. The sun and moon shall stand still* at the prayer of Joshua, that the Canaanites might not have the benefit of the night to favour their escape, they *stood still in their habitation in the heaven*, *Psal. xix. 4.* but with an eye to Gibeon and the valley of Ajalon, where God's work was in the doing, and which they, though at so vast a distance, attended the motions of. *At the light*, i. e. at the direction of *thine arrows they went*, and at the *shining of thy glittering spear*, they followed Israel's arms to favour them; according to the intimation of the arrows God shot (as Jonathan's arrows, *1 Sam. xx. 20.*) and which way soever his spear pointed (the glittering light of which they acknowledged to outline theirs) that way they directed their influences, benign to Israel, and malignant against their enemies, as when the *stars in their courses fought against Siferu*. Note, The heavenly bodies as well as earth and seas, are at God's command, and when he pleaseth at Israel's service too.

6. He carried on and completed Israel's victories over the nations of Canaan, and their kings, *slew great kings and famous*, *Psal. cxxxvi. 17, 18.* This is largely insisted upon here, as a proper plea with God, to enforce petitions, that he would restore them again to that land, which they were, at the expense of so many lives, so many miracles, first put in possession of. Many expressions are here used to set forth the conquest of Canaan. (1.) *God's bow was made quite naked*, taken out of the case to be employed for Israel; we would say, his *sword was quite unsheathed*, not drawn out a little way to frighten the enemy, and then put up again; but quite drawn out, not to be returned till they are all cut off. (2.) *He marched through the land from end to end, in indignation*, as *scorning* to let that wicked generation of Canaanites any longer possess so good a land. He marched *cum fastidio* so some; despising their confederacies. (3.) *He threshed the heathen in anger*; trod them down, nay he trod them out, as corn in the floor; to give them and what they had, to be meat to his people Israel, *Mic. iv. 13.* (4.) *He wounded the heads of the house of the wicked*, i. e. he destroyed the families of the Canaanites, and wounded their princes, the heads of their families, nay, he cut off the heads, and so *discovered the foundations of them, even to the neck*. Are they a building? They are razed even to the foundation: Are they a body? They are plunged in deep mire even to the neck, so that they cannot get out or help themselves. He *brake the heads of Leviathan in pieces*, *Psal. lxxiv. 14.* Some apply this to Christ's victories over Satan, and the powers of darkness, in which he *wounded the heads over many countries*, *Psal. ex. 6.* (5.) *He struck through with his staves, the head of the villages*, *ver. 14.* with Israel's staves God struck through the head of the villages of the enemies, whether Egypt or Canaan. Staves shall do the same execution as swords, when God pleaseth to make use of them. The enemy came out with the utmost force and fury, *as a whirlwind to scatter me from my youth*, *Psal. cxix. 1.* Pharaoh, when he pursued Israel to the Red-sea, came out as a whirlwind; so did the kings of Canaan in the confederacies against Israel: *Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly*, i. e. they were as confident of success in their enterprise, as ever any great man was of devouring a poor man, that was no way a match for him, and his design against him was carried on with secrecy. But God disappointed them, and their pride did but make their fall the more shameful, and God's care of his poor the more illustrious. (6.) *He walked to the sea with his horses*, so some read it, *ver. 15.* i. e. he carried Israel's victory to the great sea which was opposite to that side of Canaan at which they entered; so that they went quite through it, and made themselves masters of it all; or rather God made them so, for they got it not by their own sword, *Psal. xlii. 3.*

Now there were three things that God had an eye to, in giving Israel so many bloody victories over the Canaanites. (1.) He would hereby make good his promise to the fathers, it was according to the oaths of the tribes, *even his word*, *ver. 9.* he had sworn to give this land to the tribes of Israel; it was his oath to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob, and repeated many a time to the tribes of Israel, *unto thee will I give the land of Canaan*. This word God will accomplish, though Israel be never so unworthy, *Deut. ix. 5.* and their enemies never so many and mighty. Note, That God doth for his tribes according to what he hath said and sworn to them, for he is faithful that promised. (2.) He would hereby shew his kindness to his people, because of their relation to him, and his interest in them, *Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people*, *ver. 13.* All the powers of nature are shaken and the course of nature changed; and every thing seems to be thrown into disorder, and all is for the salvation of God's people. There is a people in the world that are God's people, and their salvation is that which he has in his eye in all the operations of his providence, heaven and earth shall sooner come together than any of the links in the golden chain of their salvation shall be broken; and even that which seems most unlikely, shall by an over-ruling hand be made to work for their salvation, *Phil. i. 19.* (3.) He would hereby give a type and figure of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. It is for salvation with thine anointed, with Joshua who led the armies of Israel, and was a figure of him, whose name he bore, even Jesus our Joshua. What God did for his Israel of old, was done with an eye to his anointed, for the sake of the Mediator, who was both the founder and foundation of the covenant made with them. It was salvation with him, for in all the salvations wrought for them, God looked upon the face of the anointed, and did them by him.

16. When I heard my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. 17. Although the



the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. 18. Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19. The Lord GOD is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

Within the compass of these few lines we have the prophet in the highest degree, both of *trembling* and *triumphing*; such are the varieties both of the state and the spirit of God's people in this world. In heaven there shall be no more trembling but everlasting triumphs.

1. The prophet had foreseen the prevalency of the church's enemies, and the long continuance of the church's troubles, and the sight made him tremble, ver. 16. This goes on with what he had said, ver. 2. *I have heard thy speech and was afraid; when I heard what sad times were coming upon the church, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice:* The news made such an impression, that it put me into a perfect ague-fit, the blood retiring to the heart to succour that when it was ready to faint, the extreme parts were left destitute of spirits, so that *his lips quivered*. Nay, he was so weak and unable to help himself, that he was as if *rottenness had entered into his bones*, he had no strength left in him, could neither stand nor go, he trembled in himself, trembled all over him, trembled within him; he yielded to his trembling, and troubled himself, as our Saviour did, his *flesh trembled for fear of God*, and he was afraid of his judgments, Psal. cxix. 120. He was touched with a tender concern for the calamities of the church, and trembled for fear lest they should end at length in its ruin; and that the name of Israel would be blotted out. Nor did he think it any disparagement to him, or a reproach to his courage, but freely owned he was one of those that trembled at God's word, for to them he will look with favour; *I tremble in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble*. Note, When we see a day of trouble approaching, it concerns us to provide accordingly, and to lay up something in store, by the help of which we may rest in that day; and the best way to make sure rest for ourselves in the day of trouble, is to tremble within ourselves at the word of God, and the threatenings of that word. He that has joy in store for them that sow in tears, has rest in store for them that tremble before him, Good hope through grace is founded in a holy fear: Noah that was moved with fear, and trembled within himself at the warning given him of the deluge coming, had the ark for his resting place in the day of that trouble. The prophet tells us what he said in his trembling: his fear was, when he cometh up to the people, when the Chaldean comes up to the people of Israel he will invade them, will surround them, will break in upon them, nay, as it is in the margin, he will cut them in pieces with his troops; he cried out, we are all undone, the whole nation of the Jews is lost and gone. Note, When things look bad, we are too apt to aggravate them, and make the worst of them.

2. He had looked back upon the experiences of the church in former ages, and had observed what great things God had done for them, and so he recovered himself out of his fright; and not only retrieved his temper, but fell into a transport of holy joy, with an express *non obstante* to the calamities he foresaw coming, and this, not for himself only, but in the name of every faithful Israelite.

1. He supposeth the ruin of all his creature-comforts and enjoyments, not only of the delights of this life, but even of the necessary supports of it, ver. 17. Famine is one of the ordinary effects of war, and those commonly feel it first and most that sit still and are quiet; the prophet and his

pious friends, when the Chaldean army comes, will be plundered and stripped of all they have. Or he supposeth himself deprived of all by blasting and unseasonable weather, or some other immediate hand of God. Or though the captives in Babylon have not that plenty of all good things in their own land. (1.) He supposeth the fruit-tree to be withered and become barren; the fig-tree, (which used to furnish them with much of their food, hence we often read of cakes of figs) shall not so much as blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; from which they had their drink that made glad the heart: Suppose the labour of the olive should fail, their oil which was to them as butter is to us; the labour of the olive shall lie, so it is in the margin, their expectations from it shall be disappointed. (2.) He supposeth the bread-corn to fail; the fields shall yield no meat, and since the king himself is served of the field, if the product of that be withdrawn, every one will feel the want of them. (3.) He supposeth the cattle to perish, either for want of the food which the field should yield and doth not, or by disease, or being destroyed and carried away by the enemy, the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stall. Note, When we are in the full enjoyment of our creature-comforts we should consider that there may come a time when we shall be stripped of them all, and use them accordingly, as not abusing them, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.

2. He resolves to delight and triumph in God notwithstanding; when all is gone, his God is not gone, ver. 18. Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I shall have him to rejoice in, and will rejoice in him. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, Hos. ii. 11, 12. But those who, when they were full, enjoyed God in all, when they are emptied and impoverished can enjoy all in God; and can sit down upon a melancholy heap of the ruins of all their creature-comforts, and even then can sing to the praise and glory of God, as the God of their salvation. This is the principal ground of our joy in God, that he is the God of our salvation, our eternal salvation, the salvation of the soul: and if he be so, we may rejoice in him as such in our greatest distresses, since by them our salvation cannot be hindered, but may be furthered. Note, Joy in God is never out of season, nay, it is in a special manner seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world, that it may then appear our hearts are not set upon these things, nor our happiness bound up in them. See how the prophet triumphs in God, The Lord God is my strength, ver. 18. He that is the God of our salvation in another world, will be our strength in this world, to carry us on in our journey thither, and help us over the difficulties and oppositions we meet with in our way. Even then when provisions are cut off, to make it appear that man lives not by bread alone, we may have the want of bread supplied by the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, and with the supplies of them. (1.) We shall be strong for our spiritual warfare and work; The Lord God is my strength, the strength of my heart. (2.) We shall be swift for our spiritual race, he will make my feet like hinds feet, that with enlargement of heart I may run the way of his commands and outrun my troubles. (3.) We shall be successful in our spiritual enterprises, he will make me to walk upon my high places, i. e. I shall gain my point, shall be restored unto my own land, and tread upon the high places of the enemy, Deut. xxxii.—xxxiii. 29. Thus the prophet that began his prayer with fear and trembling, concludes it with joy and triumph; for prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul. When Hannah had prayed, she went away and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. This prophet finding it so, publisheth his experience of it, and puts it into the hand of the chief singer for the use of the church, especially in the day of her captivity. And though then the harps were hung upon the willow trees, yet in hopes they would be resumed, and their right hand retrieve its cunning, which it had forgot, he set his song upon Shigionoth, ver. 1. wandering tunes according to the variable songs, and upon Neginoth, ver. 19, the stringed instruments. He that is afflicted and has prayed aright, may then be so easy, may then be so merry as to sing psalms.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET HABAKKUK.

AN

## E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

## PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

# ZEPHANIAH.

This prophet is placed last, as he was last in time of all the minor prophets before the captivity, and not long before Jeremiah, who lived at the time of the captivity. He foretells the general destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and sets their sins in order before them; which had provoked God to bring their ruin upon them; calls them to repentance; threatens the neighbour nations with the like destructions, and gives encouraging promises of their joyful return out of captivity in due time, which have a reference to the grace of the gospel. We have in the first verse an account of the prophet and the date of his prophecy, which supercedes our enquiry concerning them here.

### C H A P. I.

After the title of the book, ver. 1. here is, (1.) A threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, an utter destruction by the Chaldeans, ver. 2—4. (2.) A charge against them for their gross sins, which provoked God to bring that destruction upon them, ver. 5, 6. and so he goes on in the rest of the chapter, setting both the judgments before them, that they might prevent them or prepare for them; and the

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sins that destroy them, that they might judge themselves, and justify God in what was brought upon them. (1.) They must hold their peace because they had greatly sinned, ver. 7—9. But (2.) They shall howl because the trouble will be great. The day of the Lord is near, and it will be a terrible day, ver. 10—18. Such fair and timely warning as this did God give to the Jews of the approaching captivity, but they hardened their neck, which made their destruction remediless.

11 P

I. THE



1. **T**HE word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. 2. I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD. 3. I will consume man and beast: I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD. 4. I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests; 5. And them that worship the host of heaven upon the house tops, and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham: 6. And them that turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him.

Here is, 1. The title page of this book, *ver. 1.* in which we observe, (1.) What authority it has, and who gave it that authority; it is from heaven, and not of men. It is the word of the Lord. (2.) Who was the instrument of conveying it to the church. His name Zephaniah, which signifies the servant of the Lord, for God revealed his secrets to his servants the prophets. The pedigree of other prophets, whose extraction we have an account of, goes no farther back than their father, except Zephaniah, whose grandfather also is named. But this of Zephaniah goes back four generations, and the highest mentioned is Hizkiah; it is the very name in the original with that of Hezekiah king of Judah, (2 Kings xviii. 1.) and it is very probable is the same person, and that our prophet was lineally descended from that pious prince, and being of the royal family, he could with the better grace reprove the folly of the king's children as he doth. *ver. 8.* (3.) When this prophet prophesied; in the days of Josiah king of Judah, who reigned well, and in the twelfth year of his reign began vigorously, and carried on a work of reformation, in which he destroyed idols and idolatry. Now it doth not appear whether Zephaniah prophesied in the beginning of his reign, if so, we may suppose his prophesying had a great and good influence in that reformation. When he as God's messenger reproveth the idolatries of Jerusalem, Josiah as God's vicegerent removed them; and reformation is likely then to go on and prosper, when both magistrates and ministers do their part towards it. If it were towards the latter end of his reign that he prophesied, we easily see how a corrupt people relapse into their former distempers. The idolatries Josiah had abolished, it should seem returned in his own time, when the heat of the reformation began a little to abate and wear off. What good can the best reformers do with a people that hate to be reformed, as if they longed to be ruined?

2. The summary or contents of this book; the general proposition contained in it is, that utter destruction is coming apace upon Judah and Jerusalem for sin. Without preamble or apology he begins abruptly, *ver. 2.* By taking away I will make an end of all things from off the face of the land, saith the Lord. Ruin is coming, utter ruin; destruction from the Almighty; he hath said it, who can and will make good what he hath said, I will utterly consume all things. I will gather all things, so some. I will recal all the blessings I have bestowed, because they have abused them, and so forfeited them.

The consumption determined shall take away,

1. The inferior creatures. I will consume the beasts, the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, *ver. 3.* as in the deluge, every living substance was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground, Gen vii. 23. The creatures were made for man's use, and therefore when he has perverted the use of them, and made them subject to vanity, God, to shew the greatness of his displeasure against the sin of man, involves them in his punishment. The expressions are figurative, speaking an universal desolation. Those that fly never so high, as the fowls of heaven, and think themselves out of the reach of the enemy's hand; those that hide never so close, as the fishes of the sea, and think themselves out of the reach of the enemy's eye, yet shall become a prey to them, and be utterly consumed.

2. The children of men; I will consume man, I will cut off man from the land. The land shall be despoiled and left uninhabited; not only I will destroy Israel, but destroy man. The land shall enjoy her sabbaths, I will cut off not only the wicked men, but all men; even the few among them that are good, shall be involved in this common calamity. Though they shall not be cut off from the Lord, yet they shall be cut off from the land. It is with Judah and Jerusalem that God has his quarrel, both city and country, and upon them he will stretch out his hand; the hand of his power, the hand of his wrath, and who knows the power of his anger? *ver. 4.* They that will not humble themselves under God's mighty hand, shall be humbled and brought down by it. Note, Even Judah where God is known, and Jerusalem where his dwelling-place is, if they revolt from him and rebel against him, shall have his hand stretched out against them.

3. All wicked people, and all those things that are the matter of their wickedness, *ver. 3.* I will consume the stumbling-blocks with the wicked, the idols with the idolaters, the offences with the offenders. Josiah had taken away the stumbling-blocks, and as far as he could had purged the land of the monuments of idolatry, hoping that there would be no more idolatry; but the wicked will do wickedly, the dog will return to his vomit, and therefore since the sin will not otherwise be cured, the sinners must themselves be consumed; even the wicked with the stumbling-blocks of their iniquity, *Ezek. xiv. 3.* Since it was not done by the sword of justice, it shall be done by the sword of war. See who the sinners are that shall be consumed,

1. The professed idolaters that avowed idolatry, and were wedded to it. The remnant of Baal shall be cut off, the images of Baal, and the worshippers of those images. Josiah cut off a great deal of Baal, but that which was so close as to escape the eye, or so bold as to escape the hand of his justice, God will cut off, even all the remains of it. The Chaldeans would spare none of the images of Baal, or the worshippers of those images. The Chemarims shall be cut off: we read of them in the history of Josiah's reformation, 2 Kings xxiii. 5. He put down the idolatrous priests, the word is the Chemarim. The word signifies black men; some think because they wore black clothes, affecting to appear grave; others, because their faces were black with attending the altars, or the fires in which they burnt their children to Moloch. They seem to have been immediate attendants upon the service of Baal; they shall be cut off with the priests, the regulars with the seculars. The very name of them shall be cut off; the order shall be quite abolished, so as to be forgotten, or remembered with detestation. And among other idolaters, the worshippers of the host of heaven upon the

house-tops shall be cut off, *ver. 5.* who justified themselves in their idolatry with them that did not worship images, the work of their own hands, but offered their sacrifices, and burnt their incense to the sun, moon, and stars, immediately upon the tops of their houses; but God will let them know that he is a jealous God, and will not endure any rival; and though some have thought that the most specious and plausible idolatry, yet it will appear as great an offence to God, to give divine honours to a star, as to give them to a stone or a stock. Even the worshippers of the host of heaven shall be consumed as well as the worshippers of the beasts of the earth, or the fiends of hell. The sin of the adulterers is not the less sinful for the gaiety of the adulterer.

2. Those also shall be consumed that think to compound the matter between God and idols, and keep an even hand between them; that halt between God and Baal, and worship between Jehovah and Moloch, and swear by both; or as it might better be read, swear to the Lord and to Malcham. They bind themselves by oath and covenant, to the service both of God and idols; they have a good opinion of the worship of the God of Israel, it is the religion of their country, and has been long so, and therefore they will by no means quit it; but they think it will be very much improved and beautified if they join with it the worship of Moloch: for that also is much used in other countries, and travellers admire it, there is a great deal of good fancy and strong flame in it. They cannot keep always to the worship of a God whom they have no visible representation of; and therefore they must have an image, and what better than the image of Moloch, a king? They think they shall effectually atone for their sin if they swear to Moloch, and pursuant to that oath, burn their children in sacrifice to that idol; and yet if they do amiss in that, they hope to atone for it in worshipping the God of Israel too. Note, Those that think to divide their affections and adorations between God and idols, will not only come short of acceptance with God, but will have their doom with the worst of idolaters, for what communion can there be between light and darkness; Christ and Belial; God and mammon? She whose own the child is not, pleads for the dividing of it, for if Satan have half, he will have all; but the true mother faith, divide it not, for if God have but half, he will have none. Such waters will not be long sweet, if they come from a fountain that sends forth bitter water too; what have they to do to swear by the Lord that swear by Malcham?

3. Those also shall be consumed that have apostatized from God, to go her with those that never gave up their names to him, *ver. 6.* I will cut off, (1.) Them that are turned back from the Lord; that were well taught, and began well, that had given up their names to him, and set out at first in the worship of him, but have flown off, and turned aside, and fallen in with idolaters, and deserted those good ways of God which they were brought up in, and despised them; those God will be sure to reckon with who are renegades from his service, that began in the Spirit, and ended in the flesh; they shall be treated as deserters, to whom no mercy is shewed. (2.) Those that have not sought the Lord, nor ever enquired for him, never made any profession of religion, and think to excuse themselves with that, yet that shall not excuse them; nay, that is the thing laid to their charge; they are atheistical, careless people, that live without God in the world, and those that do so are certainly unworthy to live upon God in the world.

7. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. 8. And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel. 9. In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. 10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills. 11. Howl ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant-people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. 12. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil. 13. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

Notice is here given to Judah and Jerusalem, that God is coming forth against them, and will be with them shortly; his presence as a just avenger, his day the day of his judgment and his wrath are not far off, *ver. 7.* Those that improve not the presence of God with them as a father, but sin away that presence, may expect his presence with them as a judge, to call them to an account for the contempt put upon his grace. The day of the Lord will come; men have their day now, when they take a liberty to do what they please, but God's day is at hand; it is here called his sacrifice, a sacrifice of his preparing for the punishing presumptuous sinners is a sacrifice to the justice of God, some reparation to his injured honour; they that brought their offerings to other gods, were justly made themselves victims to the true God. On a day of sacrifice great slaughter was made; so shall there be in Jerusalem, men shall be killed up as fast as lambs for the altar, with as little regret, with as much pleasure: The slain of the Lord shall be many. On a day of sacrifice great feasts were made upon the sacrifices, so the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem shall be feasted upon by their enemies the Chaldeans: these are the guests God has prepared and invited to come and glut themselves, their revenge with slaughter, and their covetousness with plunder. Now observe,

1. Who they are that are marked to be sacrificed, that shall be visited and punished in this day of reckoning, and what it is they shall be called to an account for.

(1.) The royal family, because of the dignity of their place, shall be first reckoned with for their pride and vanity and affection, *ver. 8.* I will punish the princes and the king's children, who think themselves exempt from punishment; they shall find themselves accountable to God, and that as high as they are he is above them. They shall be punished, and all such as like them are clothed with strange apparel, that in contempt of their own country, (where probably it was the custom



to go in a very plain dress, as became the seed of Jacob that plain man.) they affected to appear in the fashion of other nations, and introduced their modes in apparel; studying to resemble those from whom God had appointed them, even in their clothes, industriously to distinguish themselves. The princes and king's children thought scorn to wear any home made stuffs, though God had provided them *fine linen and silks*, Ezek. xvi. 10. but they must send abroad to *strange* countries for their clothes, which would not please unless they were *far fetched and dear bought*; and even those of inferior rank affected to imitate the princes and the king's children. Pride in apparel is displeasing to God and a symptom of the degeneracy of a people.

(2.) The noblemen and their stewards and servants come next to be reckoned with, ver. 9. *In the same day will I punish those that leap on the threshold*; a phrase, no doubt, well understood then, and probably signified the invading their neighbours rights, entering their houses by force and violence, and seizing their possessions; they *leap on the threshold*, as much as to say, the house is their own, and they will keep their hold of it; and accordingly make all in it their own that they can lay their hands on, and so fill their masters houses with goods gotten by violence and deceit, and with all the guilt thereby contracted. Nor shall it suffice them to say, that the ill-got gains were not for themselves, but for their masters, and what they did was by their order; for the obligations we lie under to keep God's commandments, are prior and superior to the obligations we lie under to serve the interests of any master on earth.

(3.) The trading people and the rich merchants are next called to account: iniquity is found in their end of the town, among the inhabitants of *Maktesh*; a low part of Jerusalem, deep like a mortar, (for so the word signifies) the goldsmiths lived there, Neh. iii. 32. and the merchants: and they are now cut down, they are broke and have shut up their shops, and become bankrupts; nay, *all they that bear silver are cut off*, in the first place by the invaders, for the sake of the silver they carry, which is so far from being a protection to them, that it will expose and betray them. The conquerors aimed at the wealthy men, and carried them off first, while the poor of the land escaped. Or it may be meant of a general decay of trade, which was a preface and introduction to the general destruction of the land. It is the token of a declining state, when great dealers are cut down, and great bankers are cut off and become bankrupts, who cannot fall alone, but with themselves ruin many.

(4.) All the secure and careless people, the sons of pleasure, that live a loose, idle life, are next reckoned with, ver. 12. they come from all parts of the country, to take up their quarters in the heat-quarters of the kingdom; where they take private lodgings, and indulge themselves in ease and luxury; but God will find them out and punish them; *At that time I will search Jerusalem with candles*, to discover them, that they may be brought out to condign punishment. This intimates that they conceal themselves, as being either ashamed of the sin, or afraid of the punishment of it; when the judgments of God are abroad, they hope to escape by absconding, and getting out of the way, but God will search Jerusalem, as search is made for a malefactor in disguise, that is harboured by his accomplices; God's hand will find out all his enemies wherever they lie hid, and will punish not only the secret idolaters, but the secret epicures and profane; and those are they that are here described, and marks given by which they will be discovered when strict search is made for them. (1.) Their dispositions are sensual. They are settled on their lees; intoxicated with their pleasures, strengthening themselves in their wealth and wickedness, they are secure and easy, and because they have had no changes, they fear none, as Moab, Jer. xlviii. 11. *They had not been emptied from vessel to vessel*. They fill themselves with wine and strong drink, and banish all thought, saying, *To-morrow shall be as this day*, Isa. li. 12. Their being settled on their lees, signifies the same with being inclined in their own fat, Psal. xvii. 10. (2.) Their notions are atheistical; they could not live such loose lives, but that they say in their hearts, *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil*; that is, he will do nothing, they deny his providential government of the world; what good and evil there is in the world, comes by the wheel of fortune, and not by the disposal of a wise and supreme director. They deny his moral government, and his dispensing of rewards and punishments. *The Lord will not do good to those that serve him, nor do evil to those that rebel against him*; and therefore there is nothing got by religion, nor lost by sin. This is the effect of their sensuality, if they were not drowned in sense they could not be thus senseless, not be so stupid, if they had not stupefied themselves with the love of pleasure. It was also the cause of their sensuality; men would not make a god of their belly, if they had not at first become so vain, so vile in their imaginations, as to think the God that made them altogether such an one as themselves. But God will punish them, their end is destruction, Phil. iii. 19.

2. What the destruction will be with which God will punish these sinners, and what course he will take with them. (1.) He will silence them, ver. 7. *Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord*, i. e. He will force them to hold their peace, will strike them dumb with horror and amazement, they shall be speechless, all the excuses of their sin, and exceptions against the sentence will be over ruled, and they shall not have a word to say for themselves. (2.) He will sacrifice them, for it is the day of the Lord's sacrifice, ver. 8. he will give them into the hands of their enemies, and glorify himself thereby. (3.) He will fill both city and country with lamentation, ver. 10. *In that day there shall be the noise of a dry stream from the fish-gate*, so called because near either to the fish-ponds or the fish-market. It belonged to the city of David, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 14. Neh. iii. 3. perhaps the same with that which is called the first gate, Zech. xiv. 10. and if so, it will explain what follows here, *And a howling from the second*, viz. the second gate, which was next to that fish-gate: the alarm shall go round the walls of Jerusalem, from gate to gate; and there shall be a great crashing from the hills, a mighty noise from the mountains round about Jerusalem, either from the acclamations of the victorious invaders, or the lamentations of the timorous invaded, or both. The inhabitants of the city, even of the closest, safest part of the city shall howl, ver. 11. so clamorous shall the grief be. (4.) They shall be stripped of all they have, it shall be a prey to the enemy, ver. 13. *Their household goods, and shop goods, shall become a booty*, and a rich booty they shall be, *their houses shall be levelled with the ground and be a desolation*; those of them that have built new houses shall not inherit them, but the invaders shall get and keep possession of them. And the vineyards they have planted they shall not drink the wine of, but instead of having it for the relief of their friends that faint among them, they shall part with it for the animating of their foes that fight against them, Deut. xxviii. 30.

14. The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of dark-

ness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. 18. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

Nothing could be expressed with more spirit and life, nor in words more proper to startle and awaken a secure and careless people, than the warning here given to Judah and Jerusalem, of the approaching destruction by the Chaldeans. That is enough to make the sinners in Zion tremble that it is the day of the Lord, the day in which he will manifest himself by taking vengeance on them. It is the great day of the Lord, a specimen of the day of judgment, a kind of dooms-day, as the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is represented to be in our Saviour's prediction concerning it, Matt. xxiv. 27.

1. This day of the Lord is here spoken of as very near; the vision is not for a great while to come, as those imagine that put the evil day far from them; they deceive themselves that look upon it as a thing at a distance, for it is near, it is near, it hasteth greatly. The prophet gives the alarm like one that is in earnest, like one that awakens a family with the cry of fire, fire, when it is at next door that the danger is. It is near, it is near, and therefore it is high time to bestir yourselves, and do what you can for your own safety before it be too late. It is madness for those to slumber whose damnation slumbereth not, and to linger when it hastens.

2. It is spoken of as a very dreadful day; the very voice of this day of the Lord, the noise of it when it is coming shall be so terrible, as to make the mighty men cry there bitterly, cry for fear as children do. It shall be a vexation to hear the report of it. In the last great day of the Lord the mighty men shall cry bitterly to rocks and mountains to shelter them, but in vain. Observe how emphatically the prophet speaks of this day approaching, ver. 15. It is a day of wrath, God's wrath, wrath in perfection, wrath to the utmost. It will be a day of trouble and distress to the sinners, they shall be in pain, and shall see no ways of easing or helping themselves. The miseries of the damned are summed up (perhaps with reference to this here) in the indignation and wrath of God, which is the cause, and the tribulation and anguish of a sinner's soul, which is the effect, Rom. ii. 3, 9. It will be a day of trouble and distress to the inhabitants, and a day of wasteness and desolation to the whole land; that fruitful land shall be turned into a wilderness. It shall be a day of darkness and gloominess, every thing shall look dismal, and there shall not be the least gleam of comfort or glimpse of hope; look round and it is all black. It is a day of clouds and thick darkness, there is not only nothing encouraging, but every thing threatening; the thick clouds are big with storms and tempests.

3. It is spoken of as a destroying day, ver. 16, 17. It shall be destroying, (1.) To places, even the strongest and best fortified. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities to break into them, and against the high towers, to bring them down; for what forts, what fences can hold out against the wrath of God? (2.) To persons, ver. 17. I will bring distress upon men, the strongest and stoutest of men, their hearts and hands shall fail them; they shall walk like blind men, wandering endlessly because they have sinned against the Lord. Note, Those that walk as ill men, will justly be left to walk as blind men, always in the dark, in doubt and danger, without any guide or comfort, and falling at length into the ditch. Because they have sinned against the Lord, he will deliver them into the hands of cruel enemies, that shall pour out their blood as dust, so profusely and with as little regret, and their flesh shall be thrown as dung upon the dunghill.

4. The destruction of that day will be unavoidable and universal, ver. 18. (1.) There shall be no escaping it by ransom. Neither their silver nor their gold, which they have hoarded up so covetously against the evil day, or which they have spent so prodigally to make friends for such a time, shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. Another prophet borrowed these words from this, with reference to the same event, Ezek. vii. 4. Note, Riches profit not in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4. Nay, riches expose to the wrath of men, Eccles. v. 13. and riches abused to the wrath of God. (2.) There shall be no escaping it by flight or concealment; for the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy, and where then can a hiding-place be found? See what the fire of God's jealousy is, and what the force of it, it will devour whole lands, how then can particular persons stand before it? He shall make riddance, a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land; as the husbandman when he rids his ground, cuts up all the briars and thorns for the fire. Note, Sometimes the judgments of God make riddance, even utter riddance with sinful nations, a speedy riddance; their destruction is effected, is completed, in a little time. Let not sinners be laid asleep by the patience of God, for when the measure of their iniquity is full, his justice will both overtake and overcome; will make quick work and thorough work.

## CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have, 1. An earnest exhortation to the nation of the Jews to repent and make their peace with God, and so to prevent the judgments threatened before it was too late, ver. 1-3. and this inferred from the revelation of God's wrath against them in the foregoing chapter. 2. A denunciation of the judgments of God against divers of the neighbour nations that had assisted or rejoiced in the calamity of Israel. (1.) The Philistines, ver. 4-7. (2.) The Moabites and Ammonites, ver. 8-11. (3.) The Ethiopians and Assyrians, ver. 12-15. All these shall drink of the same cup of trembling that is put into the hands of God's people, as was also foretold by other prophets before and after.

1 GATHER yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; 2. Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you. Before the day of the LORD's anger come upon you. 3. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek

seek



seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger.

Here we see what the prophet meant in that terrible description of the approaching judgments which we had in the foregoing chapter, from first to last: his design was not to drive the people to despair, but to drive them to God and to their duty, not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins. And in pursuance of that he here calls them to repentance; national repentance, as the only way to prevent a national ruin. Observe,

1. The summons given them to a national assembly, *ver. 1. Gather yourselves together.* He had told them in the last words of the foregoing chapter, that God would make a *speedy riddance of all that dwell in the land*, upon which one would think it should follow, disperse yourselves, and flee for shelter where you can find a place; when the decree was absolutely gone forth for the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, that was the advice given, *Matt. xxiv. 16. Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains*; but here it is otherwise; God warns that he may not wound, threatens that he may not strike, and therefore calls to the people to use means for the turning away of his wrath. The summons are given to a *nation not desired.* The word signifies, either, (1.) *Not desiring*, that has not any desires towards God or the remembrance of his name; is not desirous of his favour and grace, but very indifferent to it; has no mind to repent and reform; yet *come together*, and see if you can stir up desires in one another. Thus God is often found of those that *sought him not*, nor *asked for him*, *Isa. lxv. 1.* Or, (2.) *Not desirable*, no ways lovely, nor having any thing in them amiable, or which might recommend them to God. The land of Israel had been a *pleasant land, a land of delight*, *Dan. xi. 41.* but now it is unlovely, it is a *nation not desired*; to which God might justly say, *depart from me*, but he saith, *gather together to me*, and let us see if any expedient can be found out for the preventing the ruin. *Gather together* that you may in a body humble yourselves before God, may fast and pray and seek his face. *Gather together to consult* among yourselves what is to be done in this critical juncture, that every one may *consider of it*, may give and *take advice* and *seek his mind*; and that what is done may be done by *consent*, and so may be a national act. Some read it, *enquire into yourselves*, yea, *enquire into yourselves*; examine your consciences, look into your hearts, search and try your ways; *enquire into yourselves* that you may find out the sin, by which God has been provoked to this displeasure against you, and may find out the way of returning to him. Note, When God is contending with us it concerns us to *enquire into ourselves*.

2. Arguments urged to press them to the utmost seriousness and expedition herein, *ver. 2.* Do it in earnest, do it with all speed before it be too late; *before the decree bring forth, before the day pass.* The manner of speaking here is very lively and awakening, designed to make them apprehensive (as all sinners are concerned to be). (1.) That their danger is very great, their all lies at stake, it is a matter of life and death which therefore well requires and well deserves the closest application of mind that can be. It is not a trifle, and therefore is not a thing to be trifled about. It is the *fierce anger of the Lord* that is kindled against them, and is just ready to kindle upon them; that *devouring fire* which none can *dwell with*, which none can make head against, or hold up their head under. It is the *day of the Lord's anger*, the day set for the pouring out of the full vials of it, that you are threatened with, that *great day of the Lord* spoken of, *chap. i. 14.* Are you not concerned to prepare for that day? (2.) That it is very imminent; bestir yourselves now quickly, *before the decree bring forth*, and then it will be too late, the opportunity will be lost and never retrieved. The decree is as it were big with child, and it will *bring forth the day*, the terrible day which shall *pass as chaff*, i. e. which shall hurry you away into captivity as *chaff* before the wind. *We know not what a day may bring forth.* *Prov. xxvii. 1.* but we do know what the *decree will bring forth* against impenitent sinners, whom therefore it highly concerns to repent in time, in the *accepted time*. Note, It is the wisdom of those whom God has a controversy with, to agree with him quickly, while they are in the way, before his *fierce anger* comes upon them not to be *turned away*. In a case of this nature delays are highly *dangerous*, and may be *fatal*, they will be so if by them the heart is hardened. How solicitous should we all be to make our peace with God before the Spirit withdraws from us, or ceaseeth to strive with us; *before the day of grace be over*, or the day of life; *before* our everlasting state shall be determined on the other side the great gulph fixed.

3. Directions prescribed for the doing of this effectually. It is not enough to gather together in a congregation, but they must seriously and calmly apply themselves to the duty of the day, *ver. 3. Seek ye the Lord*: that they might find mercy with God, they are here put upon *seeking*; for so is the rule, *seek, and ye shall find*. A general call was given to the whole nation to *gather together*, but little good is to be expected from the far greater part of them; if the land be saved it must be by the interest and intercession of the *pious few*, and therefore to them the exhortation here is particularly directed. And observe, (1.) How they are *described*, they are *the meek of the earth*, or of the land. It is the distinguishing character of the people of God that they are the *meek ones of the earth*; this is their badge, it is their livery: they are *modest* and humble and low in their own eyes, they are *mild* and gentle, and yielding to others, not soon angry, not very angry, not long angry, they are the *quiet in the land*, *Psal. xxv. 20.* And they are *subject* and *submissive* to their God, to all his precepts and all his providences: acted by this principle and disposition, they have *wrought his judgments*, i. e. have obeyed his laws, observed his institutions, have made conscience of their duty to him, and have laid out themselves for the advancement of his honour and interest in the world. (2.) What they are required to do; they must *seek*; which notes both a *careful enquiry* and a *constant endeavour*, that they may know and do their duty. (1.) They must *seek the Lord*, seek his favour and grace, address to him upon all occasions, ask of him what they need, seek him early, seek him diligently, and continue seeking him. (2.) They must *seek righteousness*, seek to God for the performance of his promises to you, and see to it that you abound yet more in duty to him, seek for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to you, for the graces of God's Spirit to be implanted in you: hunger and thirst after it. (3.) They must *seek meekness*; this is a grace they were so eminent for, that they were denominated the *meek of the land*, and yet this they must *seek*. Note, Those that are never so good must still strive to be better, that have never so much grace must be still praying and labouring for more. Nay, they that excel in any particular grace must still seek to excel yet more, in that; because in that most assaults will be made upon them by their enemies, and in that most is expected from them by their friends, and in that they are most apt to be themselves secure. *Si dixisti, sufficit, perisisti.* In the difficult trying times approaching, the meek will find exercise for all the meekness they have, and all little enough, and therefore should *seek it earnestly*, and pray that when God in his providence gives them occasion for it, he would by his grace enable them to exercise it, *to show all meekness to all men*, in all instances; that as the day is, so may the strength be.

4. Encouragements given to take these directions; *it may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* (1.) You particularly that are the *meek of the earth*; though the day of the Lord's anger do come upon the land, yet you shall be safe, you shall be taken under special protection, *verily it shall be well with thy remnant*, *Jer. xv. 11. Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey*, *Jer. xlv. 5. I will deliver thee in that day*, *Jer. xxxix. 17. It may be you shall be hid*; if any be hid, you shall. Good men cannot be sure of temporal preservation, for *all things come alike to all*, but they are most likely to be hid, and stand fairest for a distinguishing care of providence. It is expressed thus doubtfully to try if they will trust the goodness of God's nature, though they have but that it may be of a promise; and to keep up in them a holy fear and watchfulness, lest they should seem to come short, and should do any thing to throw themselves out of the divine protection. Note, Those that hold fast their integrity in times of common iniquity have reason to hope that God will find out a hiding-place for them, where they shall be safe and easy in times of common calamity. They shall be hid (as Luther saith) *aut in celo, aut sub celo*, either in heaven or under heaven, either in the possession of heaven, or under the protection of heaven. Or, (2.) *You of this nation*, though it be a *nation not desired*, yet in the day of the Lord's anger with the neighbour nations, when his judgments are abroad, *you shall be hid*, your land shall be preserved for the sake of those few meek ones that stand in the gap, to *turn away the wrath of God*. It concerns us all to make it sure to ourselves; that we shall be hid in the *great day of God's wrath*; and if we hide ourselves in chambers of duty, God will hide us in chambers of safety, *Isa. xxvi. 20.* If we prepare an ark, that shall be our hiding place, *Gen. vii. 1.*

4. ¶ For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation; they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. 5. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coasts, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. 6. And the sea coasts shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks. 7. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah: they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

The prophet here comes to foretel what share the neighbour nations should have in the destructions made upon those parts of the world by Nebuchadnezzar and his victorious Chaldees, as other of the prophets did at that time: which is designed, (1.) To awaken the people of the Jews by making them sensible how strong, how deep, how large the inundation of calamities should be, that the *day of the Lord* that was near might appear the more dreadful, and they might thereby be quickened to prepare for it, as for a general deluge. (2.) To comfort them with this thought, that their case, though sad, should not be singular, *Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris*; and much more with this, that though God had seemed to be their enemy, and to fight against them, yet he was still so far their friend, and an enemy to their enemies, that he *resented* and would *revenge* the indignities done them.

In these verses we have the doom of the Philistines, that were near neighbours and old enemies to the people of Israel. Five lordships there were in that country, only four are here named; Gaza and Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron, Gath, the fifth, is not named; some think, because it was now subject to Judah. They were the *inhabitants of the sea-coasts*, *ver. 5.* for their country lay upon the great sea; the *nations of the Cherethites* is here joined with them, which bordered upon them, *1 Sam. xxx. 14.* and fell with them, as is foretold also, *Ezek. xxv. 18.* The Philistines land is here called Canaan, for it belonged to that country which God gave to his people Israel, and was inherited in the grant made to them, *Josh. xiii. 3.* This land is yet to be possessed, *five lords of the Philistines*, so that they wrongfully kept Israel out the possession of it, *Judges iii. 3.* which is now remembered against them. For though others rights may be long detained unjustly, the righteous God will at length avenge the wrong.

It is here foretold that the Philistines, the usurpers, shall be *dispossessed* and quite extirpated. In general, here is a woe to them, *ver. 5.* which coming from God speaks all misery; *The word of the Lord is against them.* The word of the former prophets, which, though not yet accomplished, will be in its season, *Isa. xiv. 31.* This word, now by this prophet is against them. Note, Those are really in a woeful condition that have the *word of the Lord against* them, for no word of his shall fail to the ground. They that rebel against the precepts of God's word shall have the threatenings of the word against them. The effect will be, no less than their destruction. (1.) God himself will be the author of it, *I will even destroy thee*, who can make good what he saith and will. (2.) It shall be an universal destruction, it shall extend itself to all parts of the land, both city and country: *Gaza shall be forsaken*, though now a populous city, it was foretold, *Jer. xlvii. 5.* that *barrenness* should come upon Gaza; Alexander the Great razed that city, and we find, *Acts viii. 26.* that Gaza was a desert. Ashkelon shall be a desolation, a pattern of desolation; *Ashdod shall be driven out at noon-day*; in the extremity of the scorching heat they shall have no shade, no shelter to protect them, but then when most incommoded by the weather, they shall be forced away into captivity, which will be an aggravating circumstance of it. Ekron likewise shall be *rooted up*, that had been long taking root. The land of the Philistines shall be *despeopled*, *there shall be no inhabitant*, *ver. 5.* God made the earth to be inhabited, *Isa. xlv. 18.* otherwise he had made it *in vain*; but if men do not answer the end of their creation in serving God, it is just with God that the earth should not answer the end of its creation in serving them for an habitation; man's sin hath sometimes subjected it to this *vanity*. (3.) It shall be an utter destruction. The sea-coast that used to be a harbour for ships, and a habitation for merchants, shall now be deserted, and be only *cottages for shepherds* and *folds for flocks*, *ver. 6.* and then perhaps put to better use than when it was possessed by the lords of the Philistines.

2. It is here foretold, that the house of Judah, the rightful owners, shall *recover the possession* of it, *ver. 7.* The remnant of them that shall *return out of captivity*, when God visits them, shall be made to *lie down in safety in the houses of Ashkelon*; to lie down in the evening, when they are weary and sleepy. There they shall feed themselves and their flocks. Note, God will at length restore his people to their rights, though they may be long kept out from them.

8. ¶ I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have



have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. 9. Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation, the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. 10. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts. 11. The LORD will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heaven.

The Moabites and Ammonites were both of the posterity of Lot; their countries joined, and both adjoined to Israel, they are here put together in the prophecy against them.

1. They are both charged with the same crime, and that was reproaching and reviling the people of God, and triumphing in their calamities, ver. 8. They have reproached my people; while God's people kept close to their duty it is probable they reproached them for the singularities of their religion, and now they had revolted from God, and were fallen under his displeasure, they reproached them for that too. It has been the common lot of God's people in all ages, to be reproached and reviled upon one account or other; thus the old serpent spits his venom, and pride is at the bottom of it; it is in their pride that they have magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts, thinking themselves as good as they, as great, and every way as happy. It is the contempt of the proud that God's people are filled with, Psal. cxxiii. 4. They have spoken big (so some read it, magna locuti sunt) against their border, ver. 8. against those of them that bordered upon their country, whom upon all occasions they insulted: or against property they claimed which they disputed, or the protection they boasted of which they ridiculed; they spoke big against the people of the Lord of hosts, as a deserted abandoned people; great swelling words of vanity are the genuine language of the church's enemies. But I have heard them, saith God, and will let you know that I have heard them. I have heard and I will reckon for them, Jude 15. And if God hears the reproaches and revilings we are under, it is a good reason why we should be as a deaf man that hears not, Psal. xxxviii. 14, 15. Nay, God not only takes notice of, but interests himself in the reproaches cast on his people, because they are his; and it is certain they who look with disdain upon the people of the Lord of hosts thereby dishonour the Lord of hosts himself. See this very thing charged on Moab and Ammon, Ezek. xxv. 3—8.

2. They are both laid under the same doom. Associates in iniquity may expect to be so in desolation. See with what solemnity sentence is pronounced upon them, ver. 9. It is the Lord of hosts, the sovereign Lord of all, who has authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it; it is the God of Israel who is jealous for their honour; it is he that has said it, nay he hath sworn it, As I live, saith the Lord. The sentence is, (1.) That the Moabites and Ammonites shall be quite destroyed; they shall be as Sodom and as Gomorrah, the marks of whose ruins in the Dead-sea lay near adjoining to the countries of Moab and Ammon; they shall, though not by the same means, even fire from heaven, yet almost in the same manner be laid waste; not again to be inhabited, or not of a long time. The country shall produce nothing but nettles instead of corn; and there shall be brine-pits, instead of the pleasant fountains of water, with which the country had abounded. (2.) That Israel shall be too hard for them; shall spoil them of their goods, and possess their country by lawful war. Note, Proud men sometimes by the just judgment of God, fall under the mortification of being trampled upon themselves by those whom when time was they haughtily trampled upon. And this shall they have for their pride.

3. Other nations shall in like manner be humbled, that the Lord alone may be exalted, ver. 11. The Lord will be terrible unto the Moabites and Ammonites, in particular, who have made themselves a terror to Israel: For, (1.) Heathen gods must be abolished; they have long had possession, and their worshippers have both glorified them, and glorified in them. But the Lord will famish all the gods of the earth, will starve them out of their strong holds: the Pagans had a fond conceit, that their idols were regulated by their offerings, and did eat the fat of their sacrifices, Deut. xxxii. 38. Omnia comesta a Belo. But it is here promised that when the Christian religion is set up in the world, men shall be turned from the service of these dumb idols, shall forsake their altars, and bring no more sacrifices to them, and thus they shall be famished or made lean, as the word is; their priests shall. This speaks the vanity of those idols, it lies in the power of their worshippers to furnish them; whereas the true God saith, If I were hungry, I would not tell thee. It speaks also the victory of the God of Israel over them; now know we that he is greater than all gods. (2.) Heathen nations must be converted; when the gospel gets ground, by it men shall be brought to worship him who lives for ever, (for that is the command of the everlasting gospel, Rev. xiv. 7.) every one from his place; they shall not need to go up to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel, but wherever they are, they may have access to him; I will that men pray every where. God shall be worshipped, not only by all the tribes of Israel, and the strangers who join themselves to them, but by all the isles of the heathen; this is a promise which looks favourably upon our native country, for it is one of the most considerable of the isles of the Gentiles, by which God will be glorified.

12. ¶ Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword. 13. And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. 14. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds; for he shall uncover the cedar-work. 15. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her, shall hiss and wag his hand.

The cup is going round when Nebuchadnezzar is going on conquering and to conquer: and not only Israel's near neighbours, but those that lay more remote, must be reckoned with for the wrongs they had done to God's people; the Ethiopians or Assyrians are here taken to task.

1. The Ethiopians or Arabians, that had sometimes been a terror to Israel as in Asa's time, 2 Chron. xiv. 9. must now be reckoned with. They shall be slain by my sword, ver. 12. Nebuchadnezzar was God's sword, the instrument in his hand, with which these and other enemies were subdued and punished, Psal. xvii. 14.

2. The Assyrians, and Nineveh the head city of their monarchy, are next sent to the bar to receive their doom. He that is God's sword will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and make himself master of it. Assyria had been the rod of God's anger against Israel, and now Babylon is the rod of God's anger against Assyria, Isa. x. 5. He will make Nineveh a desolation, as had been lately and largely foretold by the prophet Nahum. Observe,

1. How flourishing Nineveh's state had formerly been, ver. 15. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly. Nineveh was so strong that she feared no evil, and therefore dwelt carelessly, and set danger at defiance; was so rich that she thought herself sure of all good, and therefore was a rejoicing city, full of mirth and gaiety; and had such a dominion that she admitted no rival, but said in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me, that can compare with me, no city in the world that can pretend to be equal with me; God can with his judgments frighten the most secure, humble the most haughty, and mar the mirth of those that most laugh now.

2. How complete Nineveh's ruin shall now be; it shall be made a desolation, ver. 13. such a heap of ruins shall this once pompous city be, that it shall be, (1.) A receptacle for beasts, such a wilderness that flocks shall lie down in it; nay, such a waste, desolate, frightful place, that wild beasts, the beasts of the nations, all kinds of beasts shall take up their abode there; the melancholy birds, as the cormorant and bittern, shall make their nests in what remains of the houses, as they sometimes do in old ruinous buildings that are uninhabited and unfrequented. The lintels of chapiters of the pillars, the windows and thresholds, and all the fine cedar work curiously engraven shall lie exposed; and on them these rueful, ominous birds shall perch, and their voice shall sing. How are the songs of mirth turned into hideous horrid noises! What little reason have men to be proud of stately buildings, and rich furniture, when they know not what all the pomp of them may come to at last. (2.) A derision to travellers. They that had come from far to gratify their curiosity with the sight of Nineveh's splendor, shall now look on her with as much contempt as ever they looked upon her with admiration, ver. 15. Every one that passeth by shall hiss at her, and wag his hand, making light of her desolations, nay, and making sport with them; there is an end of proud Nineveh. They shall not weep and wring their hands, their adversities are unpitied and unlamented, that were insolent and haughty in their prosperity; but they shall hiss and wag their hands, forgetting perhaps that their own ruin is not far off.

### C H A P. III.

We now return to Jerusalem, and must again hear what God has to say to her, (1.) By way of reproof and threatening, for the abundance of wickedness that was found in her, of which divers instances are given, with the aggravations of them, ver. 1—7. (2.) By way of promise of mercy and grace, which God had yet in reserve for them. Two general heads of promises here are. (1.) That God would bring in a glorious work of reformation among them, cleanse them from their sins, and bring them home to himself; many promises of this kind here are, ver. 8—13. (2.) That he would bring about a glorious work of salvation for them, when he had thus prepared them for it, ver. 14—20. Thus the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to clear his own way, shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. These promises were to have their full accomplishment in gospel times and gospel grace.

1. **WOE** to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city. 2. She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction: she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God. 3. Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves, they knew not the bones till the morrow. 4. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. 5. The just LORD is in the midst thereof: he will not do iniquity; every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not, but the unjust knoweth no shame. 6. I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate, I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. 7. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me; thou wilt receive instruction, so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.

One would wonder that Jerusalem the holy city where God was known, and his name was great, should be the city of which this black character is here given, that a place that enjoyed such plenty of the means of grace, shall become so very corrupt and vicious, and that God should permit it to be so; yet so it is, to shew that the law made nothing perfect; but if this be the true character of Jerusalem, as no doubt it is, for God's judgment will make none worse than they are, it is no wonder that the prophet begins with woe to her. For the holy God hates sin in those that are nearest to him, nay, in them he hates it most. A sinful state is, and will be a woeeful state.

1. Here is a very ill character given of the city in general; how is the faithful city become a harlot! (1.) She shames herself; she is filthy and polluted, has made herself infamous, so some read it; ver. 1. the gluttonous city, so the margin, always cramming and making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it. Sin is the filthiness and pollution of persons and places, and makes them odious in the sight of the holy God. (2.) She wrongs her neighbours and inhabitants; she is the oppressing city, never any place had statutes and judgments so righteous as this city had, and yet in the administration of the government, never was more unrighteousness. (3.) She is very provoking to her God, and in every respect walks contrary to him, ver. 2. He has given his law, and spoken to her by his servants the prophets, telling her what is the good she should do, and what the evil she should



seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger.

Here we see what the prophet meant in that terrible description of the approaching judgments which we had in the foregoing chapter, from first to last: his design was not to drive the people to despair, but to drive them to God and to their duty, not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins. And in pursuance of that he here calls them to repentance, national repentance, as the only way to prevent a national ruin. Observe,

1. The summons given them to a national assembly, *ver. 1. Gather yourselves together.* He had told them in the last words of the foregoing chapter, that God would make a *speedy riddance of all that dwell in the land*, upon which one would think it should follow, disperse yourselves, and flee for shelter where you can find a place; when the decree was absolutely gone forth for the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, that was the advice given, *Matt. xxiv. 16. Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains*; but here it is otherwise; God warns that he may not wound, threatens that he may not strike, and therefore calls to the people to use means for the turning away of his wrath. The summons are given to a *nation not desired*. The word signifies, either, (1.) *Not desiring*, that has not any desires towards God or the remembrance of his name; is not desirous of his favour and grace, but very indifferent to it; has no mind to repent and reform; yet *come together*, and see if you can stir up desires in one another. Thus God is often found of those that *sought him not*, nor *asked for him*, *Isa. lxv. 1.* Or, (2.) *Not desirable*, no ways lovely, nor having any thing in them amiable, or which might recommend them to God. The land of Israel had been a *pleasant land, a land of delight*, *Dan. xi. 41.* but now it is unlovely, it is a *nation not desired*; to which God might justly say, *depart from me*, but he saith, *gather together to me*, and let us see if any expedient can be found out for the preventing the ruin. *Gather together* that you may in a body humble yourselves before God, may fast and pray and seek his face. *Gather together to consult* among yourselves what is to be done in this critical juncture, that every one may *consider of it*, may give and *take advice* and *speaking his mind*; and that what is done may be done by *consent*, and so may be a national act. Some read it, *enquire into yourselves*, yea, *enquire into yourselves*; examine your consciences, look into your hearts, search and try your ways; *enquire into yourselves* that you may find out the sin, by which God has been provoked to this displeasure against you, and may find out the way of returning to him. Note, When God is contending with us it concerns us to *enquire into ourselves*.

2. Arguments urged to press them to the utmost seriousness and expedition herein, *ver. 2.* Do it in earnest, do it with all speed before it be too late; *before the decree bring forth, before the day pass.* The manner of speaking here is very lively and awakening, designed to make them apprehensive (as all sinners are concerned to be). (1.) That their danger is very great, their all lies at stake, it is a matter of life and death which therefore well requires and well deserves the closest application of mind that can be. It is not a *trifle*, and therefore is not a thing to be *trifled about*. It is the *fierce anger of the Lord* that is kindled against them, and is just ready to kindle upon them; that *devouring fire* which none can *dwell with*, which none can make head against, or hold up their head under. It is the *day of the Lord's anger*, the day set for the pouring out of the full vials of it, that you are threatened with, that *great day of the Lord* spoken of, *chap. i. 14.* Are you not concerned to prepare for that day? (2.) That it is very imminent; hasten yourselves now quickly, *before the decree bring forth*, and then it will be too late, the opportunity will be lost and never retrieved. The decree is as it were big with child, and it will *bring forth the day*, the terrible day which shall *pass as chaff*, i. e. which shall hurry you away into captivity as *chaff* before the wind. *We know not what a day may bring forth.* *Prov. xxvii. 1.* but we do know what the *decree will bring forth* against impenitent sinners, whom therefore it highly concerns to repent in time, in the *accepted time*. Note, It is the wisdom of those whom God has a controversy with, to agree with him quickly, while they are in the way, before his *fierce anger* comes upon them not to be *turned away*. In a case of this nature delays are highly *dangerous*, and may be *fatal*, they will be so if by them the heart is hardened. How solicitous should we all be to make our peace with God before the Spirit withdraws from us, or ceaseth to strive with us; *before the day of grace be over*, or the day of life; *before our everlasting state shall be determined* on the other side the great gulph fixed.

3. Directions prescribed for the doing of this effectually. It is not enough to gather together in a confection, but they must seriously and calmly apply themselves to the duty of the day, *ver. 3. Seek ye the Lord*: that they might find mercy with God, they are here put upon *seeking*: for so is the rule, *seek, and ye shall find*. A general call was given to the whole nation to *gather together*, but little good is to be expected from the far greater part of them; if the land be saved it must be by the interest and intercession of the *pious few*, and therefore to them the exhortation here is particularly directed. And observe, (1.) How they are *described*, they are *the meek of the earth*, or of the land. It is the distinguishing character of the people of God that they are the *meek ones of the earth*; this is their badge, it is their livery: they are *modest* and humble and low in their own eyes, they are *mild* and gentle, and yielding to others, not soon angry, not very angry, not long angry, they are the *quiet in the land*, *Psal. xxxv. 20.* And they are *subject and submissive* to their God, to all his precepts and all his providences: acted by this principle and disposition, they have *wrought his judgments*, i. e. have obeyed his laws, observed his institutions, have made conscience of their duty to him, and have laid out themselves for the advancement of his honour and interest in the world. (2.) What they are required to do; they must *seek*; which notes both a *careful enquiry* and a *constant endeavour*, that they may know and do their duty. (1.) They must *seek the Lord*, seek his favour and grace, address to him upon all occasions, ask of him what they need, seek him early, seek him diligently, and continue seeking him. (2.) They must *seek righteousness*, seek to God for the performance of his promises to you, and see to it that you abound yet more in duty to him, seek for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to you, for the graces of God's Spirit to be implanted in you; hunger and thirst after it. (3.) They must *seek meekness*; this is a grace they were so eminent for, that they were denominated the *meek of the land*, and yet this they must *seek*. Note, Those that are never so good must still strive to be better, that have never so much grace must be still praying and labouring for more. Nay, they that excel in any particular grace must still seek to excel yet more, in that, because in that most assaults will be made upon them by their enemies, and in that most is expected from them by their friends, and in that they are most apt to be themselves secure. *Si dixisti, sufficit, peristi.* In the difficult trying times approaching, the meek will find exercise for all the meekness they have, and all little enough, and therefore should *seek it earnestly*, and pray that when God in his providence gives them occasion for it, he would by his grace enable them to exercise it, *to shew all meekness to all men*, in all instances; that *as the day is, so may the strength be*.

4. Encouragements given to take these directions; *it may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* (1.) You particularly that are the *meek of the earth*; though the day of the Lord's anger do come upon the land, yet you shall be safe, you shall be taken under special protection, *verily it shall be well with thy remnant.* *Jer. xv. 11. Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey.* *Jer. xlv. 5. I will deliver thee in that day.* *Jer. xxxix. 17. It may be you shall be hid*; if any be hid, you shall. Good men cannot be sure of temporal preservation, for *all things come alike to all*, but they are most likely to be hid, and stand fairest for a distinguishing care of providence. It is expressed thus doubtfully to try if they will trust the goodness of God's nature, though they have but that *it may be* of a promise; and to keep up in them a holy fear and watchfulness, lest they should seem to come short, and should do any thing to throw themselves out of the divine protection. Note, Those that hold fast their integrity in times of common iniquity have reason to hope that God will find out a hiding-place for them, where they shall be safe and easy in times of common calamity. They shall be hid (as Luther saith) *aut in celo, aut sub celo*, either in heaven or under heaven, either in the possession of heaven, or under the protection of heaven. Or, (2.) *You of this nation*, though it be a *nation not desired*, yet in the day of the Lord's anger with the neighbour nations, when his judgments are abroad, *you shall be hid*, your land shall be preserved for the sake of those few meek ones that stand in the gap, to *turn away the wrath of God*. It concerns us all to make it sure to ourselves, that we shall be hid in the *great day of God's wrath*; and if we hide ourselves in chambers of duty, God will hide us in chambers of safety, *Isa. xxvii. 20.* If we prepare an ark, that shall be our hiding place, *Gen. vii. 1.*

4. ¶ For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation; they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. 5. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coasts, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. 6. And the sea coasts shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks. 7. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah: they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

The prophet here comes to foretell what share the neighbour nations should have in the destructions made upon those parts of the world by Nebuchadnezzar and his victorious Chaldees, as other of the prophets did at that time: which is designed, (1.) To awaken the people of the Jews by making them sensible how strong, how deep, how large the inundation of calamities should be, that the *day of the Lord* that was near might appear the more dreadful, and they might thereby be quickened to prepare for it, as for a general deluge. (2.) To comfort them with this thought, that their case, though sad, should not be singular, *Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris*; and much more with this, that though God had seemed to be their enemy, and to fight against them, yet he was still so far their friend, and an enemy to their enemies, that he *repented* and would *revenge* the indignities done them.

In these verses we have the doom of the Philistines, that were near neighbours and old enemies to the people of Israel. Five lordships there were in that country, only four are here named; Gaza and Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron, Gath, the fifth, is not named; some think, because it was now subject to Judah. They were the *inhabitants of the sea coasts*, *ver. 5.* for their country lay up on the great sea; the *nations of the Cherethites* is here joined with them, which bordered upon them, *1 Sam. xxx. 14.* and fell with them, as is foretold also, *Ezek. xxv. 18.* The Philistines land is here called Canaan, for it belonged to that country which God gave to his people Israel, and was inserted in the grant made to them, *Josh. xiii. 3.* This land is yet to be possessed, *five lords of the Philistines*, so that they wrongfully kept Israel out the possession of it, *Judges iii. 3.* which is now remembered against them. For though others rights may be long detained unjustly, the righteous God will at length avenge the wrong.

It is here foretold that the Philistines, the usurpers, shall be *dispossessed* and quite extirpated. In general, here is a woe to them, *ver. 5.* which coming from God speaks all misery; *The word of the Lord is against them.* The word of the former prophets, which, though not yet accomplished, will be in its season, *Isa. xiv. 31.* This word, now by this prophet is against them. Note, Those are really in a woeful condition that have the *word of the Lord against them*, for no word of his shall fall to the ground. They that rebel against the precepts of God's word shall have the threatenings of the word against them. The effect will be no less than their destruction. (1.) God himself will be the author of it, *I will even destroy thee*, who can make good what he saith and will. (2.) It shall be an universal destruction, it shall extend itself to all parts of the land, both city and country: *Gaza shall be forsaken*, though now a populous city, it was foretold, *Jer. xlvii. 5.* that *barbels* should come upon Gaza; Alexander the Great raised that city, and we find, *Acts viii. 26.* that Gaza was a desert. Ashkelon shall be a *desolation*, a pattern of desolation; *Ashdod shall be driven out at noon-day*; in the extremity of the scorching heat they shall have no shade, no shelter to protect them, but then when most incommoded by the weather, they shall be forced away into captivity, which will be an aggravating circumstance of it. Ekron likewise shall be *rooted up*, that had been long taking root. The land of the Philistines shall be *dispeopled*, there shall be no inhabitant, *ver. 5.* God made the earth to be inhabited, *Isa. xlv. 18.* otherwise he had made it *in vain*; but if men do not answer the end of its creation in serving God, it is just with God that the earth should not answer the end of its creation in serving them for an habitation; man's sin hath sometimes subjected it to this *vanity*. (3.) It shall be an utter destruction. The sea-coast that used to be a harbour for ships, and a habitation for merchants, shall now be deserted, and be only *cottages for shepherds and folds for flocks*, *ver. 6.* and then perhaps put to better use than when it was possessed by the lords of the Philistines.

2. It is here foretold, that the house of Judah, the rightful owners, shall *recover the possession of it*, *ver. 7.* The remnant of them that shall *return out of captivity*, when God visits them, shall be made to *lie down in safety in the houses of Ashkelon*; to lie down in the evening, when they are weary and sleepy. There they shall feed themselves and their flocks. Note, God will at length restore his people to their rights, though they may be long kept out from them.

8. ¶ I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have



have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. 9. Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation, the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. 10. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts. 11. The LORD will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.

The Moabites and Ammonites were both of the posterity of Lot; their countries joined, and both adjoined to Israel, they are here put together in the prophecy against them.

1. They are both charged with the same crime, and that was reproaching and reviling the people of God, and triumphing in their calamities, ver. 8. They have reproached my people; while God's people kept close to their duty it is probable they reproached them for the singularities of their religion, and now they had revolted from God, and were fallen under his displeasure, they reproached them for that too. It has been the common lot of God's people in all ages, to be reproached and reviled upon one account or other; thus the old serpent spits his venom, and pride is at the bottom of it; it is in their pride that they have magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts, thinking themselves as good as they, as great, and every way as happy. It is the contempt of the proud that God's people are filled with, Psal. cxxiii. 4. They have spoken big (so some read it, magna locuti sunt) against their border, ver. 8. against those of them that bordered upon their country, whom upon all occasions they insulted: or against property they claimed which they disputed, or the protection they boasted of which they ridiculed; they spoke big against the people of the Lord of hosts, as a deserted abandoned people; great swelling words of vanity are the genuine language of the church's enemies. But I have heard them, saith God, and will let you know that I have heard them. I have heard and I will reckon for them, Jude 15. And if God hears the reproaches and revilings we are under, it is a good reason why we should be as a deaf man that hears not, Psal. xxxviii. 14, 15. Nay, God not only takes notice of, but interests himself in the reproaches cast on his people, because they are his; and it is certain they who look with disdain upon the people of the Lord of hosts thereby dishonour the Lord of hosts himself. See this very thing charged on Moab and Ammon, Ezek. xxv. 3—8.

2. They are both laid under the same doom. Associates in iniquity may expect to be so in desolation. See with what solemnity sentence is pronounced upon them, ver. 9. It is the Lord of hosts, the sovereign Lord of all, who has authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it; it is the God of Israel who is jealous for their honour; it is he that has said it, nay he hath sworn it, As I live, saith the Lord. The sentence is, (1.) That the Moabites and Ammonites shall be quite destroyed; they shall be as Sodom and as Gomorrah, the marks of whose ruins in the Dead-sea lay near adjoining to the countries of Moab and Ammon; they shall, though not by the same means, even fire from heaven, yet almost in the same manner be laid waste; not again to be inhabited, or not of a long time. The country shall produce nothing but nettles instead of corn; and there shall be brine-pits, instead of the pleasant fountains of water, with which the country had abounded. (2.) That Israel shall be too hard for them; shall spoil them of their goods, and possess their country by lawful war. Note, Proud men sometimes by the just judgment of God, fall under the mortification of being trampled upon themselves by those whom when time was they haughtily trampled upon. And this shall they have for their pride.

3. Other nations shall in like manner be humbled, that the Lord alone may be exalted, ver. 11. The Lord will be terrible unto the Moabites and Ammonites, in particular, who have made themselves a terror to Israel: For, (1.) Heathen gods must be abolished; they have long had possession, and their worshippers have both glorified them, and glorified in them. But the Lord will famish all the gods of the earth, will starve them out of their strong holds: the Pagans had a fond conceit, that their idols were regaled by their offerings, and did eat the fat of their sacrifices, Deut. xxxii. 38. Omnia comesta a Belo. But it is here promised that when the Christian religion is set up in the world, men shall be turned from the service of these dumb idols, shall forsake their altars, and bring no more sacrifices to them, and thus they shall be famished or made lean, as the word is; their priests shall. This speaks the vanity of those idols, it lies in the power of their worshippers to furnish them; whereas the true God saith, If I were hungry, I would not tell thee. It speaks also the victory of the God of Israel over them; now know we that he is greater than all gods. (2.) Heathen nations must be converted; when the gospel gets ground, by it men shall be brought to worship him who lives for ever, (for that is the command of the everlasting gospel, Rev. xiv. 7.) every one from his place; they shall not need to go up to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel, but wherever they are, they may have access to him; I will that men pray every where. God shall be worshipped, not only by all the tribes of Israel, and the strangers who join themselves to them, but by all the isles of the heathen; this is a promise which looks favourably upon our native country, for it is one of the most considerable of the isles of the Gentiles, by which God will be glorified.

12. ¶ Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword. 13. And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. 14. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds; for he shall uncover the cedar-work. 15. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her, shall hiss and wag his hand.

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The cup is going round when Nebuchadnezzar is going on conquering and to conquer: and not only Israel's near neighbours, but those that lay more remote, must be reckoned with for the wrongs they had done to God's people; the Ethiopians and Assyrians are here taken to task.

1. The Ethiopians or Arabians, that had sometimes been a terror to Israel as in Asa's time, 2 Chron. xiv. 9. must now be reckoned with. They shall be slain by my sword, ver. 12. Nebuchadnezzar was God's sword, the instrument in his hand, with which these and other enemies were subdued and punished, Psal. xvii. 14.

2. The Assyrians, and Nineveh the head city of their monarchy, are next sent to the bar to receive their doom. He that is God's sword will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and make himself master of it. Assyria had been the rod of God's anger against Israel, and now Babylon is the rod of God's anger against Assyria, Isa. x. 5. He will make Nineveh a desolation, as had been lately and largely foretold by the prophet Nahum. Observe,

1. How flourishing Nineveh's state had formerly been, ver. 15. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly. Nineveh was so strong that she feared no evil, and therefore dwelt carelessly, and set danger at defiance; was so rich that she thought herself sure of all good, and therefore was a rejoicing city, full of mirth and gaiety; and had such a dominion that she admitted no rival, but said in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me, that can compare with me, no city in the world that can pretend to be equal with me; God can with his judgments frighten the most secure, humble the most haughty, and mar the mirth of those that most laugh now.

2. How complete Nineveh's ruin shall now be; it shall be made a desolation, ver. 13. such a heap of ruins shall this once pompous city be, that it shall be, (1.) A receptacle for beasts, such a wilderness that flocks shall lie down in it; nay, such a waste, desolate, frightful place, that wild beasts, the beasts of the nations, all kinds of beasts shall take up their abode there; the melancholy birds, as the cormorant and bittern, shall make their nests in what remains of the houses, as they sometimes do in old ruinous buildings that are uninhabited and unfrequented. The lintels of chapters of the pillars, the windows and thresholds, and all the fine cedar work curiously engraven shall lie exposed; and on them these rueful, ominous birds shall perch, and their voice shall sing. How are the songs of mirth turned into hideous horrid noises! What little reason have men to be proud of stately buildings, and rich furniture, when they know not what all the pomp of them may come to at last. (2.) A derision to travellers. They that had come from far to gratify their curiosity with the sight of Nineveh's splendor, shall now look on her with as much contempt as ever they looked upon her with admiration, ver. 15. Every one that passeth by shall hiss at her, and wag his hand, making light of her desolations, nay, and making sport with them; there is an end of proud Nineveh. They shall not weep and wring their hands, their adversities are unpitied and unlamented, that were insolent and haughty in their prosperity; but they shall hiss and wag their hands, forgetting perhaps that their own ruin is not far off.

### C H A P. III.

We now return to Jerusalem, and must again hear what God has to say to her, (1.) By way of reproof and threatening, for the abundance of wickedness that was found in her, of which divers instances are given, with the aggravations of them, ver. 1—7. (2.) By way of promise of mercy and grace, which God had yet in reserve for them. Two general heads of promises here are. (1.) That God would bring in a glorious work of reformation among them, cleanse them from their sins, and bring them home to himself; many promises of this kind here are, ver. 8—13. (2.) That he would bring about a glorious work of salvation for them, when he had thus prepared them for it, ver. 14—20. Thus the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to clear his own way, shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. These promises were to have their full accomplishment in gospel times and gospel grace.

1. **W**OE to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city. 2. She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction: she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God. 3. Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves, they knew not the bones till the morrow. 4. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. 5. The just LORD is in the midst thereof: he will not do iniquity; every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not, but the unjust knoweth no shame. 6. I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate, I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. 7. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me; thou wilt receive instruction, so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.

One would wonder that Jerusalem the holy city where God was known, and his name was great, should be the city of which this black character is here given, that a place that enjoyed such plenty of the means of grace, shall become so very corrupt and vicious, and that God should permit it to be so; yet so it is, to shew that the law made nothing perfect; but if this be the true character of Jerusalem, as no doubt it is, for God's judgment will make none worse than they are, it is no wonder that the prophet begins with woe to her. For the holy God hates sin in those that are nearest to him, nay, in them he hates it most. A sinful state is, and will be a woeful state.

1. Here is a very ill character given of the city in general; how is the faithful city become a harlot! (1.) She shames herself; she is filthy and polluted, has made herself infamous, so some read it; ver. 1. the glutinous city, so the margin, always cramming and making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it. Sin is the filthiness and pollution of persons and places, and makes them odious in the sight of the holy God. (2.) She wrongs her neighbours and inhabitants; she is the oppressing city, never any place had statutes and judgments so righteous as this city had, and yet in the administration of the government, never was more unrighteousness. (3.) She is very provoking to her God, and in every respect walks contrary to him, ver. 2. He has given his law, and spoken to her by his servants the prophets, telling her what is the good she should do, and what the evil she should



should avoid, but she obeyed not his voice; nor made conscience of doing as he commanded her in any thing. He has taken her under an excellent discipline, both of the word and of the rod, but she did not receive the instruction of the one, nor the correction of the other; did not submit to God's will, nor answer his end in either: he encouraged her to depend upon him, and his power and promise for deliverance from evil, and supply with good, but she trusted not in the Lord; her confidence was placed in her alliances with the nations, more than in her covenant with God: he gave her tokens of his presence, and instituted ordinances of communion for her with himself, but she drew not near to her God, did not meet him where he appointed, and where he promised to meet her. She stood at a distance, and said to the almighty, Depart.

2. Here is a very ill character of the leading men in it; those that should by their influence suppress vice and profaneness there, are the great patterns and patrons of it; and those that should be her physicians are really her worst disease. (1.) Her princes are ravenous and barbarous as *roaring lions* that make a prey of all about them: and are universally feared and hated; they use their power for destruction, and not for edification. (2.) Her judges, that should be the protectors of injured innocency, are *evening wolves*, rapacious and greedy, and their cruelty and covetousness both insatiable. *They know not the bones till the morrow*: they take so much delight and pleasure in cruelty and oppression, that when they have devoured a good man, they reserve the bones as it were for a sweet morsel to be gnawed the next morning, *Job xxxi. 31.* (3.) Her prophets, that pretended to be special messengers from heaven to them, were *light and treacherous persons*, fanciful, and of a vain imagination, frothy and airy, and of a loose conversation, men of no consistency with themselves, nor that one could put any confidence in, they were so given to bantering, that it was hard to say when they were serious. Their pretended prophecies were all a sham, and they secretly laughed at those that were deluded by them. (4.) Her priests, that were teachers by office, and had the charge of the holy things, were false to their trust and betrayed it: they were to preserve the purity of the sanctuary, but they did themselves pollute it, and the sacred offices of it, which they were to attend upon; such priests as Hophni and Phineas, that by their wicked lives made the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred. They were to expound and apply the law, and to judge according to it, but in their explications and applications of it, they did violence to the law; they corrupted the sense of it, and perverted it to the patronising of that which was directly contrary to it; by forced constructions, they made the law to speak what they pleased to serve a turn, and so in effect made void the law.

3. We have here the aggravations of this general corruption of all orders and degrees of men in Jerusalem.

1. They had the tokens of God's presence among them, and all the advantages that could be of knowing his will, with the strongest inducements possible to do it, and yet they persisted in their disobedience, *ver. 5.* (1.) They had the honour and privilege of the Shechinah, God's dwelling in their land, so as he dwelt not with any other people. *The just Lord is in the midst of thee to take cognizance of all thou dost amiss, and give countenance to all thou dost well*; he is in the midst of thee as a *holy God*, and therefore thy pollutions are the more offensive, *Deut. xxiii. 14.* He is in the midst of thee as a *just God*, and therefore will punish the affronts you put upon him and the wrongs and injuries you do to one another. (2.) They had God's own examples set before them in the discovery he made of himself to them, that they might conform to it, *he will not do iniquity*, and therefore you should not, for this was the great rule of their institution, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*. God will be true to you, be not you then false to him. (3.) He sent to them his prophets, rising up early and sending them, *every morning doth he bring his judgment to light*, as duly as the morning comes, *he falleth not*, he shews them plainly what the good is he requires of them, and puts them in mind of it; he *wakeneth morning by morning*, *Isa. l. 4.* wakens his prophets with the rising sun, to bring to light the things which belonged to their peace. So that upon the whole matter, what more could have been done to his vineyard to make it fruitful! *Isa. v. 4.* And yet, after all, *the unjust knows no shame*, they that have been unjust, are unjust still, and are not ashamed of their unrighteousness, *neither can they blush*. If they had any sense of honour, any shame left in them, they would not go so directly contrary to their profession, and to the instructions given them. But they that are past shame, are past cure.

2. God has set before their eyes some remarkable monuments of his justice, which were designed for warning to them, *ver. 6.* *I have cut off the nations*, the seven nations of Canaan, which the land spued out for their wickedness; upon which they had this caution given them, to take heed lest it spue them out also, *Lev. xviii. 28.* Or it may refer to some of the neighbour nations that were made desolate for their wickedness, especially to the nation of Israel, the ten tribes; their towers were desolate, their high towers, their strong towers, their pride and power broken, their streets wasted, so that none passed along through them; the cities were destroyed and laid in ruins, *no man was to be found in them, no inhabitant*, all were slain, or carried into captivity. The enemies did it, but God avows it, *I cut them off*, saith he. And God designed this for an admonition to Jerusalem, *Ezek. xxiii. 9-11.* *I said surely thou wilt fear me*, surely these judgments upon others will deter thee from the like wicked practices; *surely thou wilt receive instruction by these providences*; it ought reasonably to be expected, that thou wouldst not continue to sin like the nations, when thou seest the ruin which their sin brought upon them. They could not but see their own house in danger, when their neighbour's was on fire; and when we are frightened God should be feared.

3. He had set before them life and death, good and evil, both in his word and in his providence. (1.) He had assured them of the continuance of their prosperity, if they would fear him and receive instruction, for so their dwelling would not be cut off as their neighbour's was; if they took the warning given them and reformed, what was past should be pardoned, and their tranquillity lengthened out. (2.) He had made them feel the smart of the rod, though he reprieved them from the sword; *howsoever I punished them*, that being chastened they might not be condemned: such various methods did God take with them to reclaim them, but all in vain, they were not won upon by gentle methods, nor had severe ones any effect, for they rose early and corrupted all their doings; they were more resolute and eager in their wicked courses than ever; more studious and solicitous in making provision for their lusts, and let slip no opportunity, for the gratification of them. God rose up early to send them his prophets, to reduce and reclaim them, but they were up before him, to shut and bolt the door against them. Their wickedness was universal, all their doings were corrupted, and it was all along of themselves, they could not lay the blame upon the tempter, but they alone must bear it; they themselves wilfully and designedly corrupted all their doings; for every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed.

8. ¶ Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations that I may assemble

the kingdoms: to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy: 9. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent. 10. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. 11. In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain. 12. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. 13. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

Things looked very bad with Jerusalem in the foregoing verses; she is got into a very ill name, and seems to be incorrigible, incurable, mercy-proof, and judgment-proof. Now one would think it should follow, therefore expect no other but that she should be utterly abandoned and rejected as *reprobate silver*; since they will not be wrought upon by prophets or providences, let them be made a desolation as their neighbours have been; but behold and wonder at the riches of divine grace, which takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious. They still grew worse and worse; therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, *ver. 8.* since the law, it seems, will make nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope shall; let those that lament the corruptions of the church wait upon God, till he send his Son into the world to save his people from their sins, till he send his gospel to reform and refine his church, and to purify to himself a peculiar people both of Jews and Gentiles. And there were those who according to this direction and encouragement, waited for redemption, for this redemption in Jerusalem, and long looked for came at last, *Luke ii. 38.* For judgment Christ will come into this world, *John iv. 39.*

1. To avenge what has been done amiss against his church, to bring down and destroy the enemies of it, its spiritual enemies: of which the destruction of Babylon, and other the oppressors of God's people, in the Old Testament times, was a type, and would be a happy presage. He will rise up to the prey to lead captivity captive, *Psal. lxxviii. 18.* to conquer and spoil the powers of darkness, and the powers on earth, that set themselves against the Lord and his anointed; he will break them with a rod of iron, *Psal. ii. 5-9.* ex. 5, 6. his determination is to gather the nations, and to assemble the kingdoms. By the gospel of Christ preached to every creature all nations are summoned, as it were, to appear in a body before the Lord Jesus, who is about to set up his kingdom in the world. But since the greatest part of mankind will not obey the summons he will pour upon them his indignation, for he that believes not is condemned already. At the time of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, there shall be on earth distress of nations with perplexity, *Luke xxi. 25.* great tribulation, such as never was, or never shall be, *Matt. xxiv. 21.* Then God pours upon the nations his indignation, even all his fierce anger, for their indignation and fierce anger against the Messiah and his kingdom, *Psal. ii. 1, 2.* Then all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of his jealousy, both Jews and Gentiles shall be reckoned with for their enmity to the gospel. Principalities and powers shall be spoiled, and made a show of openly, and the victorious redeemer shall triumph over them. Those that continue to be of the earth, and to mind earthly things, after God had set up the kingdom of heaven among men, their end shall be destruction, *Phil. iii. 19.* they shall be devoured with the fire of God's jealousy.

2. To amend what he finds amiss in his church. When God intends the restoration of Israel, and the revival of their peace and prosperity, he makes way for it by their reformation, and the revival of their virtue and piety; for this is God's method, both with particular persons and with communities, first to make them holy, and then to make them happy. These promises were in part accomplished after the return of the Jews, out of Babylon, when by their captivity they were thoroughly cured of their idolatry; and this was all the fruit, even the taking away of sin; but it looks further, to the blessed effects of the gospel, and the grace of it, to those times of reformation we live in, *Heb. iii. 10.*

1. It is promised that there shall be a reformation in men's discourse, which had been generally corrupt, but should now be with grace seasoned with salt, *ver. 9.* *Then will I turn to the people a pure language*, i. e. I will turn the people to such a language, from that evil communication which had almost ruined all good manners among them. Note, Converting grace refines the language, not by making the phrases witty, but the substance wise. Among the Jews after the captivity, there needed a reformation of the dialect, for they had mingled the language of Canaan with that of Ashdod, *Neh. xiii. 24.* and that grievance shall be redressed. But that is not all; their language shall be purified from all profaneness, filthiness and falsehood. I will turn them to a choice language; so some read it; they shall not speak rashly, but with caution and deliberation: they shall choose out their words. Note, An air of purity and piety in common conversation, is a very happy omen to any people. Other graces, other blessings shall begin where God gives a pure language to those that have been a people of unclean lips.

2. That the worship of God according to his will shall be more closely applied to, and more unanimously concurred in: instead of sacrifice and incense, they shall call upon the name of the Lord; prayer is the spiritual offering with which God must be honoured; and to prepare and fit us for that duty, it is necessary that we have a pure language. We are utterly unfit to take God's name into our lips, unless they be pure lips. The purifying of the language in common conversation, is necessary to the acceptableness of the word of our mouth, and the meditation of our heart in our devotion: for how can sweet waters and bitter come out of the same fountain? *James iii. 9, 10, 11, 12.* It is likewise promised that their language being thus purified, they shall serve God with one consent, with one shoulder, so the word is; alluding to oxen in the yoke, that drew even; when Christians are unanimous in the service of God, the work goes on cheerfully. This is the effect of the pure language, purified from passion, envy and censoriousness. Note, Purity is the way to unity; the reformation of manners the way to a comprehension: the wisdom from above is first pure then peaceable.

3. That those that were driven from God should return to him, and be accepted of him, *ver. 10.* From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia; i. e. from Egypt, so described, *Isa. xlviii. 1.* or from some other very remote country, my suppliants, even the daughters of my dispersed shall bring mine offering, those that by reason of their distance had almost forgotten God, and their obligations



obligations to him, shall be put in mind of him, as the prodigal son was of his father's house in the far country. Those that by reason of their *dispersion* under the tokens of his displeasure, might be afraid of coming to him, yet even they shall be gathered under his wings: the *daughter of his dispersed* that is *as far off*, will be found among those whom the Lord our God shall call; and though they are *dispersed*, he will own them for his; his calling them *my dispersed*, puts honour upon them, sufficient to balance all the disgrace of their dispersion. These shall come, (1.) With their humble petitions; they are *my supplicants*. Note, True converts are *supplicants* to God; they do not plead, but *make supplication to their judge*, Job ix. 15. and wherever they are, though *beyond the rivers of Ethiopia*, a great way off from his house of prayer, he has his eye upon them, and his ear open to them, they are *his supplicants*. (2.) With their spiritual sacrifices they shall bring *mine offering*; shall bring themselves as spiritual sacrifices to God, Rom. xii. 1. The conversion of the Gentiles, is called the *offering up of the Gentiles*, Rom. xv. 16. and with themselves, they shall bring the gospel sacrifices, of prayer, and praise, and alms, with which God is well pleased.

4. That sin and sinners shall be purged out from among them, ver. 11. God will take away, (1.) Their just reproach, *in that day shall thou not be ashamed for all thy doings*. They shall be ashamed as *penitents*, and shall continue to be so, see Ezek. xvi. 63. but they shall not be ashamed as sinners that return to folly again. *Thou shalt not be ashamed*, i. e. thou shalt no more do a shameful thing as thou hast done. The guilt of sin being taken away by pardoning mercy, the reproach of it shall be rolled away from the sinner's own conscience, that being *purified*, and *pacified* and *cleansed from dead works*. When wickedness and wicked people abound in a nation, those few in it that are good, are ashamed of them, and of their land; but when sinners are converted, and the land reformed, that shame and the cause of it are removed. (2.) Their unjust glorying. *I will take away out of the midst of thee*, not only the profane that are a shame to thy land, but the hypocrites that appear beautiful outwardly, and *rejoice in thy pride*, in the holy city, the holy house; these were indeed Israel's glory, but they made them their *pride* and *rejoiced* in them, as if they were an invincible bulwark to secure them in their sinful ways; they relied on them as their *righteousness* and strength, boasting of the *temple of the Lord*, Jer. vii. 4. they were *haughty because of the holy mountain*; were conceited of themselves, scornful of others, and set even the judgments of God at defiance. Note, Church-privileges, when they are not duly improved as they ought to be, are often made the matter of men's pride, and the ground of their security. But that *haughtiness* is of all other the most offensive to God, which is supported and fed by the pretensions of holiness. This God will *silence* and take away.

5. That God will have a remnant of holy, humble, serious people among them, that shall have the comfort of their relation to him, and interest in him, ver. 12. *I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people*. When the Chaldeans carried away the Jews into captivity, they left of the *poor of the land* for *vine-dressers and husbandmen*, a type and figure of God's distinguished remnant; whom he sets apart for himself: they are *afflicted and poor*, low in the world, such *God hath chosen*, Jam. ii. 5. The poor are evangelized, low in their own eyes, afflicted for sin, poor in spirit. They are God's *leaving*, for it is a *remnant according to the election of grace*: *I have reserved them to myself*, saith God, Rom. xi. 4, 5. and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. Note, Those whom God designs for the glory of his name, he enables to trust in his name. And the greater their affliction and poverty in the world is, the more reason they see to trust in God, having nothing else to trust to, 1 Tim. v. 5.

6. That this select remnant shall be blessed with purity and peace, ver. 13. (1.) They shall be blessed with *purity*, both in words and actions; they shall neither *do iniquity*, nor *swear lies*. Justice and veracity shall command them and govern them, though it be never so much against their secular interest. They shall not only not speak a direct, deliberate lie, but *there shall not be a deceitful tongue found in their mouth*, not in the mouth of any of them; not the least equivocation shall come from them. (2.) They shall be blessed with *peace*. They shall as the sheep of God's pasture feed and lie down, and *none shall make them afraid*. They shall not be *fearful* themselves, nor shall any about them be *frightful* to them. Note, Those that are careful not to *do iniquity*, need not be afraid of any calamity, for it cannot hurt them, and therefore should not *terrify* them.

14. Sing, O daughter of Zion: shout, O Israel: be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. 15. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. 16. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion Let not thine hands be slack. 17. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save, will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. 18. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. 19. Behold, at that time, I will undo all that afflict thee: I and will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. 20. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

After the promises of taking away of sin, here follow promises of the taking away of trouble; for when the cause is removed the effect will cease. What makes a people *holy*, will make them *happy* of course. The precious promises here made to the purified people, were to have their full accomplishments in the comforts of the gospel. In the hope, and much more in the enjoyment of which, they are here called upon, (1.) To rejoice and sing, ver. 14. Sing, O daughter of Zion, sing for joy, shout, O Israel, in a holy transport and exultation: *Be glad and rejoice with all the heart*; let the joy be inward, let it be great; those that love God with all their heart, have occasion with all their heart to rejoice in him. It was promised, ver. 13. that their sins should be mortified and their tears silenced, and then, follows, sing and rejoice. Note, Those that reform have cause to rejoice; whereas Israel cannot rejoice for joy as other people, while she

goes a whoring from her God. God's promises applied by faith, furnish the saints with constant and abundant matter for joy: they are filled with joy and peace in believing them. (2.) To throw off all their discouragements, ver. 16. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, God will say it by his prophets, by his providences, their neighbours shall say it, they shall say it one to another, *Fear thou not*, be not disposed to fear, do not easily admit the impressions of it, when things are bad fear not their being worse, but hope they will mend: frighten not thyself upon every occasion. Let not their hands be slack or faint; wring not thy hands in despair, drop not thy hands in despondency, disfit not thyself for thy work and warfare, by giving way to doubts and fears. Pluck up thy spirits, and in token of that lift up thy hands, the hands that hang down, Heb. xii. 12. Isa. xxxv. 3. Lift up thy hands in prayer to God, lift up thy hands to help thyself. Fear makes the hands slack, but faith and hope make them vigorous, and the joy of the land will be our strength both for doing and suffering.

Let us now see what these precious promises are, which are here made to the people of God, for the banishing of their griefs and fears, and the encouraging of their hopes and joys, and to us are these promises made as well as to them.

1. An end shall be put to all their troubles and distresses, ver. 15. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments; hath removed all the calamities thou hast been groaning under, which were the punishments of thy sin; the noise of war shall be silenced, the reproach of famine done away, and the captivity brought back. Though some grievances remain they shall be only *afflictions*, not *judgments*, for sin shall be pardoned. He hath cast out thine enemy, that has thrust himself into thy land, and triumphed over thee. He hath swept out thine enemy, so some read it, as dirt is swept out of the house to the dunghill. When they sweep out their sins with the besom of reformation, God will sweep out their enemies with the besom of destruction. If they should need correction, they shall fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, and shall not again fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel. Thou shalt not see evil any more, not such evil days as thou hast seen. Note, The way to get clear of the evil of trouble, is to keep clear from the evil of sin; and to them that do so trouble has no real evil in it.

2. God will give them the tokens of his presence with them; though he has long seemed to stand at a distance, they having provoked him to withdraw, he will make it to appear that he is with them of a truth. The Lord is in the midst of thee, O Zion, of thee O Jerusalem, as the sun in the centre of the universe, to diffuse his light and influence upon every part. He is in the midst of thee, to preside in all thine affairs, and to take care of all thine interests. And, (1.) He is the King of Israel, ver. 15. and is in the midst of thee as a king in the midst of his people. With an eye to this our Lord Jesus is called the King of Israel, John i. 43. and he is, and will be in the midst of his church, always, even to the end of the world, to receive the homage of his subjects, and to give out his favours to them, even where but two or three are gathered together in his name. (2.) He is thy God, thine in covenant, and he is in the midst of thee as thy God, whom thou hast an interest in, and whose own thou art. He has put himself into dear relation to thee, laid himself by promise under obligations to thee, and that thou mayest have abundant comfort in both, he is in the midst of thee, nigh at hand to answer both. (3.) He that is in the midst of thee as thy God and King is mighty, is almighty, is able to do all that for thee that thou needest and canst desire. (4.) He has engaged his power for thy succour; He will save; He will be Jesus; will answer the name, for he will save his people from their sins.

3. God will take delight in them, and in doing them good. The expressions of this are very lively and affecting, ver. 17. He will rejoice over thee with joy, will not only be well pleased with thee, upon thy repentance and reformation, and take thee into favour, but will take a complacency in thee, as the bridegroom doth in his bride, or the bride in her ornaments, Isa. lxii. 3—5. The conversion of sinners and the consolation of saints, is the joy of angels, for it is the joy of God himself. The church should be the joy of the whole earth, (Ps. lxxviii. 2.) for it is the joy of the whole heaven. He will rest in his love, will be silent in his love: so the word is: Will not rebuke thee as I have done, for thy sin; will acquiesce in thee, and in my relation to thee. I know not where there is the like expression of Christ's love to his church, unless in that song of songs, Cant. iv. 5. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thine eyes. O the condescensions of divine grace; the great God not only loves his saints but he loves to love them: is pleased that he has pitched upon these objects of his love. He will joy over them with singing. He that is grieved for the sin of sinners, rejoiceth in the graces and services of the saints, and is ready to express that joy by singing over them. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and in them Jesus Christ will shortly be glorified and admired.

4. God will comfort Zion's mourners, that sympathize with her in her griefs, and will wipe away the tears, ver. 18. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies to whom the reproach of it was a burden. See, (1.) Who they are whom God will rejoice in, and to make to rejoice: They are such as are sorrowful. They only must expect to reap in joy, that sow in tears. The sorrowful now shall be for ever joyful. (2.) What is the great matter of sorrow to Zion's mourners, when Zion is in mourning. Many are her calamities, the city is ruined, the palaces demolished; trade is at an end, and the administration of public justice; but all these are nothing to them, in comparison with the desolations of the sanctuary, the destruction of the temple and the altar; to attend on which, in solemn feasts, all Israel used to come together three times a year. It is for those sacred solemn assemblies that they are sorrowful. (1.) Because they are dispersed; there is no temple to come up to, or if there were, no people to come up to it; so that the solemn feasts and sabbaths are forgotten in Zion, Lam. ii. 6. Note, The restraining of public assemblies for religious worship, the scattering of them by their enemies, or the forsaking of them by their friends; so that either there are no assemblies or not solemn ones, is a very sorrowful thing to all good people. If the ways of Zion mourn, the sons of Zion mourn too. And hereby they make it to appear that they are indeed of Zion, living members of that body, with the grievances of which they are so sensibly affected. (2.) Because they are despised; the reproach of the solemn assemblies is a burden to them. It had been the lot of the solemn assemblies, to lie under a great deal of reproach, Satan and his instruments having a particular spite at them, as the great support of the interest of God's kingdom among men: Black and odious characters have been put upon those assemblies; and this is a burden to all those that have a cordial concern for the glory of God; and the welfare of the souls of men: They reckon, that the reproaches of those who reproach the solemn assemblies, fall upon them, fall foul upon them.

5. God will recover the captives out of the hands of their oppressors, and bring home the banished that seemed to be expelled, ver. 19, 20. (1.) Their enemies shall be disabled to detain them in bondage. At that time I will undo all that afflict thee, will break their power, and blast their counsels, so that they shall be forced to surrender the prey they have taken, Con-  
fucian, I will take them to task, I will be doing with them shortly, and so



as to make an end of them. Note, Those that abuse and oppress God's people, take the ready way to undo themselves. (2.) They shall be enabled to assert and recover their liberty, and all the difficulties in the way of it shall be surmounted. Is the church weak and wounded, *I will save her that halteth*, as was promised, *Micah iv. 7.* He will help her when she cannot help herself; even the lame shall take the prey, *Isa. xxxiii. 23.* Is she dispersed, and not likely to incorporate for her common benefit, *I will gather her that was driven out, and bring her again at the time, that I gather her*; one act of mercy and grace shall serve, both to collect them out of their dispersions and conduct them to their own land. When the people's hearts are prepared, the work will be done suddenly, and who can hinder it, if God undertake to effect it? *I will turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord*, you shall plainly discern the hand of God in it, and say, *This is the Lord's doing.*

6. God will by all this put honour upon them and gain them respect from all about them. Israel was at first made high above all nations in praise and fame, *Deut. xxvi. 19.* The reproach brought upon them was therefore one of the sorest of their grievances, nothing cuts deeper to those that are in honour than disgrace doth, and therefore when God returns in mercy to his church, it is here promised that she shall regain her credit;

all the reproach shall be for ever rolled away as Israel's at Gilgal, *Joshua v. 9.* The church shall be as honourable as ever she has been despicable. (1.) Even those that have reproached her, shall be made to respect her. *I will get them praise and fame in every land, where they have been put to shame*; that the same who were the witnesses of their disgrace, may see cause to change their mind concerning them. They that said, this is Zion whom no man looketh after, shall say, this is Zion, whom the great God looks after: And she that was looked upon to be the off-scouring of the earth, now appears to be the darling of heaven. (3.) Even those that never knew her, shall be brought to honour, *ver. 20. I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth*; so the Jewish church was, when the fear of the Jews fell upon their neighbours, *Esther viii. 17.* and some of all nations said, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, *Zech. viii. 23.* So the Christian church was, when it was made to flourish in the world, for there is that in it which may justly recommend it to the value and esteem of all the people of the earth: and so the universal church of the first-born will be in the great day, when the saints shall be brought together to Christ, that he may be admired and glorified in them, and they admired and glorified in him before angels and men. Then will God's Israel be made a name and a praise to eternity.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

# AN EXPOSITION,

## WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

# HAGGAI.

The captivity in Babylon gave a very remarkable turn to the affairs of the Jewish church, both in history and prophecy; it is made a signal epocha in our Saviour's genealogy, *Matth. i. 17.* Nine of the twelve minor prophets whose oracles we have been hitherto consulting, lived and preached before that captivity, and most of them had an eye to it in their prophecies, foretelling it as the just punishment of Jerusalem's wickedness. But the three last [in whom the Spirit of prophecy took its period until it revived in Christ's forerunner] lived and preached after the return out of captivity; not immediately upon it, but some time after. Haggai and Zechariah appeared much about the same time, eighteen years after the return, when the building of the temple was both retarded by its enemies and neglected by its friends. Then the prophets, Haggai, the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them, so we read, *Ezra, v. 1.* to reprove them for their remissness, and to encourage them to revive that good work, when it had stood still for some time, and to go on with it vigorously, notwithstanding the opposition they met with in it. Haggai began two months before Zechariah, who was raised up a second him, that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established: but Zechariah continued longer at the work; for all Haggai's prophecies that are recorded, were delivered within four months, in the second year of Darius, between the beginning of the sixth month, and the end of the ninth: but we have Zechariah's prophecies dated above two years after, *Zech. vii. 1.* Some have the honour to lead, some to last, in the work of God. The Jews ascribe to these two prophets the honour of being members of the Great Synagogue, (as they call it) which was formed after the return out of captivity; we think it more certain that it was their honour, and a much greater honour, that they prophesied of Christ. Haggai spoke of him as the glory of the latter house, and Zechariah as the Man, the Branch, in them the light of that morning star shone more bright than in the foregoing prophecies, as they lived nearer the time of the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and now began to see his day approaching. The LXX. made Haggai and Zechariah to be the penmen of Psalm cxxxviii. and of Psalm cxlvi. cxlvii. and cxlviii.

### CHAP. I.

In this chapter, after the preamble of the prophecy, we have, (1.) A reproof of the people of the Jews for their dilatoriness and slothfulness in building of the temple, which had provoked God to contend with them by the judgment of famine and scarcity, with an exhortation to them to resume that good work, and to prosecute it in good earnest, *ver. 1—11.* (2.) The good success of this sermon, appearing in the people's return and close application to that work, wherein the prophet in God's name animated and encouraged them, assuring them that God was with them, *ver. 12—15.*

1. **I**N the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech the high priest, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built. 3. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai, the prophet, saying, 4. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? 5. Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little: ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but are not filled with

drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. 7. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. 9. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. 10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. 11. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men and upon cattle, and upon all the labours of the hands.

It was the complaint of the Jews in Babylon that they saw not their signs, and there was no more any prophet, *Psal. lxxiv. 9.* which was a just judgment upon them for mocking and mis-using the prophets; We read of no prophets they had in their return, as there were in their coming out of Egypt, *Nos. xii. 13.* God stirred them up immediately by his Spirit to exert themselves in that escape, *Ezra i. 5.* for though God makes use of prophets, he needs them not, he can do his work without them. But the lamp of Old Testament prophecy, shall yet make some bright and glorious efforts before it expire,



pire, and Haggai is the first that appears under the character of a special messenger from heaven when the word of the Lord had been long precious, (as when prophecy began, 1 Sam. iii. 1.) and there had been no open vision. In the reign of Darius Hystaspes, the third of the Persian kings, in the second year of his reign, the prophet was sent; and the word of the Lord came to him and came by him to the leading men among the Jews; who are here named, ver. 1. The chief governor, (1.) *In the state*; that was Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, of the house of David, who was commander in chief of the Jews in their return out of captivity. (2.) *In the church*; and that was Joshua the son of Josedech, who was now high priest. They were great men and good men, and yet were to be stirred up to their duty when they grew remiss. What the people also were faulty in they must be told of, that they might use their power and interest for the mending of it. The prophets were extraordinary messengers, did not go about to set aside the ordinary institutions of magistracy and ministry, but endeavoured to render both more effectual, for the ends to which they were appointed, for both ought to be supported. Now observe,

1. What the sin of the Jews was at this time, ver. 2. As soon as they came up out of captivity, they set up an altar to sacrifice, and within a year after laid the foundations of a temple, Ezra iii. 10. they then seemed very forward in it, and it was likely enough that the work would be done suddenly; but being served with a prohibition some time after from the Persian court, and charged not to go on with it, they not only yielded to the force when they were actually under it, which might be excused, but afterwards, when the violence of the opposition was abated, they continued very indifferent to it, had no spirit of courage to set about it again, but seemed glad they had a pretence to let it stand still. Though they who are employed for God may be driven off from their work by a storm, yet they must return to it as soon as the storm is over: These here did not do so, but continued loitering, until they were afresh minded of their duty. And that which they suggested one to another, was, *The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built*, i. e. *Our time is not come for the doing of it*, because we have not yet got up our backs after our captivity, our losses are not repaired, nor have we yet got before-hand in the world; it is too great an undertaking for new beginners in the world, as we are, let us first get our own houses up, before we talk of building churches; and in the mean time let a bare altar serve us, as it did our father Abraham. They did not say, they would not build a temple at all, but not yet; it is all in good time. Note. Many a good work is put off by being put off as Felix put off the prosecution of his convictions to a more convenient season. They do not say they will never repent and reform and be religious, but not yet: And so the great business we were sent into the world to do, is not done, under pretence it is all in good time to go about it. (2.) *God's time is not come for the doing of it*; for (say they) the restraint laid upon us by authority in a legal way is not broken off, and therefore we ought not to proceed though there be a present convenience of authority. Note. There is an aptness in us to misinterpret providential discouragements in our duty, as if they amounted to a discharge from our duty, when they are only intended for the trial and exercise of our courage and faith. It is bad to neglect our duty, but it is worse to vaunt providence for the patronizing of our negligences.

2. What the judgments of God were, by which they were punished for this neglect, ver. 6—9, 10, 11. They neglected the building of God's house and put that off, that they might have time and money for their secular affairs. They desired to be excused from such an expensive piece of work, under this pretence, that they must provide for their families: their children must have meat and portions too, and until they have got before-hand in the world they cannot think of rebuilding the temple. Now that the punishment might answer the sin, God by his providence kept them still behind-hand: And that poverty which they thought to prevent by not building the temple, God brought upon them for not building it. They were sensible of the smart of the judgments, and every one complained of the unreasonable weather and the great loss they sustained in their corn and cattle, and the decay of trade; but they were not sensible of the cause of the judgment, and the ground of God's controversy with them: they did not own, would not see and own, that it was for their putting off the building of the temple that they lay under these manifest tokens of God's displeasure, and therefore God here gives them notice, that this was it for which he contended with them. Note. We need the help of God's prophets and ministers to extend to us not only the judgments of God's mouth, but the judgments of his hands, that we may understand his mind and meaning, in his rod as well as in his word: to discover to us, not only wherein we have offended God, but wherein God shows himself offended at us. Let us observe,

(1.) *How God contended with them*. He did not send them into captivity again, nor bring a foreign enemy upon them, as they deserved, but took the correcting of them into his own hands, for his mercies are great. (1.) He that giveth seed to the sower denied his blessing upon the seed sown, and then it never prospered, they had nothing or next to nothing from it. They sowed much, ver. 6. kept a deal of ground in tillage, which they might expect would turn to a better advantage than usual, because their land had long lain fallow and had enjoyed its sabbaths. Having sowed much they looked for much from it, enough to spend, and enough to spare too, but were disappointed; they bring in little, very little, ver. 6. however, when they have made the utmost of it, it comes to little, ver. 9. it did not yield as they expected. Isa. v. 10. *The seed of an homer shall yield an ephah*, a bushel's sowing shall yield a peck. Note. Our expectations from the creature are oftentimes most frustrated, when they are most raised; and then, when we look for much it comes to little, that our expectation may be from God only, in whom it will be out-done. We are here told how they came to be disappointed, ver. 10. *The heaven over you is shut from dew*; he that has the key of the clouds in his hands, shut them up, and withheld the rain when the ground called for it: the former or the latter rain, and then of course the earth is slain from her fruit; for if the heaven be as brass, the earth is as iron. The corn perhaps came up very well and promised a very plentiful crop, but for want of the dews at earing-time, it never filled, but was parched with the heat of the sun, and withered away. The restored captives that had long been kept bare in Babylon, thought they should never want when they had got their own land in possession again, and had that at command: But what the better are they for it, unless they had the clouds at command too? God will make us sensible of our necessary and constant dependence upon him, throughout all the links in the chain of second causes from first to last; so that we can at no time say, Now we have no farther occasion for God and his providence. See Hos. ii. 21. But God not only withheld the cooling rains, but he appointed the scorching heats, ver. 11. *I called for a drought upon the land*, ordered the weather to be extremely hot, and then the fruits of the earth were burnt up. See how every creature is that to us that God makes it to be, either comfortable or afflictive, serving us or incommoding us: nothing among the inferior creatures is so necessary and beneficial to the world as the heat of the sun, that is it that puts life into the plants, and renews the face of the earth at spring: And yet, if that go into an extreme it undoes all again. Our Creator is our best friend, but if we make him our enemy, we make the best friends we have among the creatures our enemies too. This drought God calls for, and it came at the call; as the winds and the waves to the rays of the sun obey

him. It was universal, and the ill effects of it general; it was a drought upon the mountains, which lying high were first affected with it; the mountains were their pasture grounds, and of 4 to be covered over with flocks, but now there is no grass for them: It was upon the corn, the new wine, and the oil, all failed through the extremity of the hot weather, even all that the ground brought forth, it was all withered; Nay, it had an ill influence upon men; the hot weather enfeebled some, and made them weary and fainty and spent their spirits; it inflamed others, and put them into fevers. It should seem it brought diseases upon cattle too. In short, it spoiled all the labour of their hands, which they hoped to eat of, and maintain their families by. Note. *Meat for the belly is meat that perissheth*, and if we labour for that only, we are in danger of losing our labour; but are sure our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, if we labour for the meat which endures to eternal life: for the hand of the diligent, in the business of religion, will infallibly make rich, whereas in the business of this life, the most solicitous and the most industrious often lose the labour of their hands. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. (2.) He that giveth bread to the eater denied his blessing upon the bread they eat, and then that did not nourish them. The cause of the withering and failing of the corn in the field was visible, it was for want of rain; but besides that there was a secret blast and curse attending that which they brought home. (1.) When they had it in the barn, they were not sure of it: *I did blow upon it, saith the Lord of hosts*, ver. 9. and that withered it, as buds are sometimes blasted in the spring by a nipping frost, which we see the effects of, but know not the way of. *I did blow it away*, so the margin reads it. When men have heaped wealth together God can scatter it with the breath of his mouth, as easily as we can blow away a feather. Note. We can never be sure of any thing in this world, it is exposed not only when it is in the field, but when it is housed; for there moth and rust corrupt. Matt. vi. 19. And if we would have the comfort and continuance of our temporal enjoyments we must make God our friend, for if he bless them to us they are blessings indeed; but if he blow upon them we can expect no good from them, they make themselves wings and fly away. (2.) When we had it upon the board it was not that to them that they expected. *Ye eat, but have not enough*, either because the meat is wasthy and not satisfying, or because the stomach is greedy and not satisfied; you eat, but you have no good digestion, and are not nourished by it, nor doth it answer the end, or you have not enough, because you are not content, nor think it enough. *Ye drink, but are not cooled and refreshed by it, ye are not filled with drink*; you are flinted and have not enough to quench your thirst. The new wine is cut off from your mouth, Joel i. 5. nay, and you drink your water too by measure and with astonishment; you have no comfort of it, because you have no plenty of it, but are still in fear of falling short. (3.) That which they had upon their backs did them no good there; *ye clothe you, but there is none warm*, your clothes soon wear out and wax old and grow thin, because God blows upon them, contrary to what Israel's did in the wilderness when God blessed them. It is God that makes our garments warm upon us, when he quaketh the earth, Job xxxvii. 17. (4.) That which they had in their bags, which was not laid out, but laid up, yet they were not sure of it; *ye that earne wages*, by hard labour, and has it paid him in ready current money, yet puts it into a bag with holes, it drops through and wastes away insensibly. Every thing is so scarce and dear, that they spend their money as fast as they get it. Those that lay up their treasure on earth, put it into a bag with holes, they lose it as they go along, and they that come after them pick it up: But if we lay up our treasure in heaven, we provide for ourselves bags that wax not old, Luke xvii. 33.

(2.) Observe wherefore God thus contended with them, and stopped the current of those favours promised them at their return, (Joel ii. 21) they provoked him to do it; *It is because of my house that is waste*. That is the quarrel God has with them; the foundation of the temple is laid, but the building doth not go on; Every man runs to his own house to finish that, and to make that convenient and fine, and no care is taken about the Lord's house; and therefore it is that God crosseth you thus in all your affairs, to testify his displeasure against you for that neglect, and to bring you to a sense of your sin and folly. Note. As those that seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, shall not only find them, but are most likely to have other things added to them, so they who neglect and postpone those things, will not only lose them, but will justly have other things taken away from them. And if God cross us in our temporal affairs, and we meet with trouble and disappointment, we shall find this is the cause of it; the work we have to do for God and our own souls is left undone, and we seek our own things more than the things of Jesus Christ, Phil. ii. 21.

(3.) The reproof which the prophet gives them for their neglect of the temple work, ver. 4. *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses*, to have them beautified and adorned, and your families settled in them? They were not content with walls and roofs for necessity, but they must have for gaiety and fancy; it is high time, saith one, that my house was waincoated, and high time, saith another, that mine were painted; and God's house all this time lies waste, and nothing is done at it. What, saith the prophet, is it time you should have your humour pleased, and not time you should have your God pleased? How was their disposition the reverse of David's, who could not be easy in his house of cedar, while the ark of God was in curtains, 2 Sam. vii. 2. and of Solomon, who built the temple of God before he built a palace for himself. Note. Those are very much strangers to their own interest that prefer the conveniences and ornaments of the temporal life before the absolute necessities of the spiritual life, that are full of care to enrich their own houses while God's temple in their hearts lies waste, and nothing is done for it, or in it.

4. The good counsel which the prophet gives to them who thus despised God, and whom God was therefore justly displeased with.

1. He would have them reflect. *Now therefore consider your ways*, ver. 5. and again, ver. 7. Be sensible of the hand of God gone out against you and enquire into the reason; think what you have done, that has provoked God thus to break in upon your comforts; and think what you will do to testify your repentance, that God return in mercy to you. Note, it is the great concern of every one of us, to consider our ways; to set our hearts to our ways, so the word is, to think on my ways, Psal. cxxix. 59. to search and try them, Lam. iii. 40. to ponder the path of our feet, Prov. iv. 26. to apply our minds with all seriousness to the great and necessary duty of self-examination; and communing with our own hearts concerning our spiritual state, our sins that are past, and our duty for the future; for sin is what we must answer for, duty is what we must do, about these therefore we must be inquisitive, rather than about events which we must leave to God. Many are quick-sighted to pry into other people's ways, that are very careless of their own; whereas our concern is to prove every one his own work, Gal. vi. 4.

2. He would have them reform, ver. 8. *Go up to the mountains*, to Lebanon, and bring wood, and other materials that are wanting, and build the house with all speed, put it off no longer, but set to it in good earnest. Note. Our considering of our ways must issue in our amending of whatever we find amiss in them. If any duty has been long neglected, that is not a reason why it should still be so, but why now at length it should be revived; better late than never. And for their encouragement to apply themselves in



as to make an end of them. Note, Those that abuse and oppress God's people, take the ready way to undo themselves. (2.) They shall be enabled to assert and recover their liberty, and all the difficulties in the way of it shall be surmounted. Is the church weak and wounded, *I will save her that halteth*, as was promised, *Micah iv. 7.* He will help her when she cannot help herself; even *the lame shall take the prey*, *Isa. xxxiii. 23.* Is she dispersed, and not likely to incorporate for her common benefit, *I will gather her that was driven out, and bring her again at the time, that I gathered her*; one act of mercy and grace shall serve, both to collect them out of their dispersions and conduct them to their own land. When the people's hearts are prepared, the work will be done suddenly, and who can hinder it, if God undertake to effect it? *I will turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord*, you shall plainly discern the hand of God in it, and say, *This is the Lord's doing.*

6. God will by all this put honour upon them and gain them respect from all about them. Israel was at first made high above all nations in praise and fame, *Deut. xvi. 19.* The reproach brought upon them was therefore one of the sorest of their grievances, nothing cuts deeper to those that are in honour than disgrace doth, and therefore when God returns in mercy to his church, it is here promised that she shall regain her credit;

all the reproach shall be for ever rolled away as Israel's at Gilgal, *Joshua v. 9.* The church shall be as honourable as ever she has been despicable. (1.) Even those that have reproached her, shall be made to respect her. *I will get them praise and fame in every land, where they have been put to shame*; that the same who were the witnesses of their disgrace, may see cause to change their mind concerning them. They that said, this is Zion whom no man looketh after, shall say, this is Zion, whom the great God looks after: And she that was looked upon to be the off-scouring of the earth, now appears to be the darling of heaven. (3.) Even those that never knew her, shall be brought to honour, *ver. 20. I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth*; so the Jewish church was, when the fear of the Jews fell upon their neighbours, *Esther viii. 17.* and some of all nations said, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, *Zech. viii. 23.* So the Christian church was, when it was made to flourish in the world, for there is that in it which may justly recommend it to the value and esteem of all the people of the earth: and so the universal church of the first-born will be in the great day, when the saints shall be brought together to Christ, that he may be admired and glorified in them, and they admired and glorified in him before angels and men. Then will God's Israel be made a name and a praise to eternity.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

# AN EXPOSITION,

## WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the PROPHET

# HAGGAI.

The captivity in Babylon gave a very remarkable turn to the affairs of the Jewish church, both in history and prophecy; it is made a signal epocha in our Saviour's genealogy, *Matth. i. 17.* Nine of the twelve minor prophets whose oracles we have been hitherto consulting, lived and preached before that captivity, and most of them had an eye to it in their prophecies, foretelling it as the just punishment of Jerusalem's wickedness. But the three last [in whom the Spirit of prophecy took its period until it revived in Christ's forerunner] lived and preached after the return out of captivity; not immediately upon it, but some time after. Haggai and Zechariah appeared much about the same time, eighteen years after the return, when the building of the temple was both retarded by its enemies and neglected by its friends. *Then the prophets, Haggai, the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them*, so we read, *Ezra v. 1.* to reprove them for their remissness, and to encourage them to revive that good work, when it had stood still for some time, and to go on with it vigorously, notwithstanding the opposition they met with in it. Haggai began two months before Zechariah, who was raised up a second him, that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established: but Zechariah continued longer at the work; for all Haggai's prophecies that are recorded, were delivered within four months, in the second year of Darius, between the beginning of the sixth month, and the end of the ninth: but we have Zechariah's prophecies dated above two years after, *Zech. vii. 1.* Some have the honour to lead, some to last, in the work of God. The Jews ascribe to these two prophets the honour of being members of the Great Synagogue, (as they call it) which was formed after the return out of captivity; we think it more certain that it was their honour, and a much greater honour, that they prophesied of Christ. Haggai spoke of him as the glory of the latter house, and Zechariah as the Man, the Branch, in them the light of that morning star shone more bright than in the foregoing prophecies, as they lived nearer the time of the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and now began to see his day approaching. The LXX. made Haggai and Zechariah to be the penmen of Psalm cxxxviii. and of Psalm cxlvi. cxlvii. and cxlviii.

### CHAP. I.

In this chapter, after the preamble of the prophecy, we have, (1.) A reproof of the people of the Jews for their dilatoriness and slothfulness in building of the temple, which had provoked God to contend with them by the judgment of famine and scarcity, with an exhortation to them to resume that good work, and to prosecute it in good earnest, *ver. 1—11.* (2.) The good success of this sermon, appearing in the people's return and close application to that work, wherein the prophet in God's name animated and encouraged them, assuring them that God was with them, *ver. 12—15.*

1. **I**N the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech the high priest, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built. 3. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai, the prophet, saying, 4. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? 5. Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little: ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but are not filled with

drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. 7. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. 9. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. 10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. 11. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men and upon cattle, and upon all the labours of the hands.

It was the complaint of the Jews in Babylon that they saw not their signs, and there was no more any prophet, *Psal. lxxiv. 9.* which was a just judgment upon them for mocking and mis-using the prophets: We read of no prophets they had in their return, as there were in their coming out of Egypt, *Hos. xii. 13.* God stirred them up immediately by his Spirit to exert themselves in that escape, *Ezra i. 5.* for though God makes use of prophets, he needs them not, he can do his work without them. But the lamp of Old Testament prophecy, shall yet make some bright and glorious efforts before it expire,



pire, and Haggai is the first that appears under the character of a special messenger from heaven when the word of the Lord had been long precious, (as when prophecy began, 1 Sam. iii. 1.) and there had been no open vision. In the reign of Darius Hystaspes, the third of the Persian kings, in the second year of his reign, the prophet was sent; and the word of the Lord came to him and came by him to the leading men among the Jews; who are here named, *ver. 1.* The chief governor, (1.) *In the state;* that was Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, of the house of David, who was commander in chief of the Jews in their return out of captivity. (2.) *In the church;* and that was Joshua the son of Josedech, who was now high priest. They were great men and good men, and yet were to be stirred up to their duty when they grew remiss. What the people also were faulty in they must be told of, that they might use their power and interest for the mending of it. The prophets were extraordinary messengers, did not go about to set aside the ordinary institutions of magistracy and ministry, but endeavoured to render both more effectual, for the ends to which they were appointed, for both ought to be supported. Now observe,

1. What the sin of the Jews was at this time, *ver. 2.* As soon as they came up out of captivity, they set up an altar to sacrifice, and within a year after laid the foundations of a temple, *Ezra iii. 10.* they then seemed very forward in it, and it was likely enough that the work would be done suddenly; but being served with a prohibition some time after from the Persian court, and charged not to go on with it, they not only yielded to the force when they were actually under it, which might be excused, but afterwards, when the violence of the opposition was abated, they continued very indifferent to it, had no spirit of courage to set about it again, but seemed glad they had a pretence to let it stand still. Though they who are employed for God may be driven off from their work by a storm, yet they must return to it as soon as the storm is over: These here did not do so, but continued loitering, until they were afresh minded of their duty. And that which they suggested one to another, was, *The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built, i. e. Our time is not come for the doing of it,* because we have not yet got up our backs after our captivity, our houses are not repaired, nor have we yet got before-hand in the world; it is too great an undertaking for new beginners in the world, as we are, let us first get our own houses up, before we talk of building churches; and in the mean time let a bare altar serve us, as it did our father Abraham. They did not say, they would not build a temple at all, but not yet; it is all in good time. Note. Many a good work is put off by being put off as Felix put off the prosecution of his convictions to a more convenient season. They do not say they will never repent and reform and be religious, but not yet: And so the great business we were sent into the world to do, is not done, under pretence it is all in good time to go about it. (2.) *God's time is not come for the doing of it;* for (say they) the restraint laid upon us by authority in a legal way is not broken off, and therefore we ought not to proceed though there be a present connivance of authority. Note. There is an aptness in us to misinterpret providential discouragements in our duty, as if they amounted to a discharge from our duty, when they are only intended for the trial and exercise of our courage and faith. It is bad to neglect our duty, but it is worse to vouch providence for the patronizing of our neglects.

2. What the judgments of God were, by which they were punished for this neglect, *ver. 6—9, 10, 11.* They neglected the building of God's house and put that off, that they might have time and money for their secular affairs. They desired to be excused from such an expensive piece of work, under this pretence, that they must provide for their families: their children must have meat and portions too, and until they have got before-hand in the world they cannot think of rebuilding the temple. Now that the permission might answer the sin, God by his providence kept them still behind-hand: And that poverty which they thought to prevent by not building the temple, God brought upon them for not building it. They were sensible of the smart of the judgments, and every one complained of the unreasonable weather and the great loss they sustained in their corn and cattle, and the decay of trade; but they were not sensible of the cause of the judgment, and the ground of God's controversy with them: they did not own, that it was for their putting off the building of the temple that they lay under these manifest tokens of God's displeasure: and therefore God here gives them notice, that this was it for which he contended with them. Note. We need the help of God's prophets and ministers to expound to us not only the judgments of God's mouth, but the judgments of his hands, that we may understand his mind and meaning, in his rod as well as in his word; to discover to us, not only wherein we have offended God, but wherein God shows himself offended at us. Let us observe,

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him. It was universal, and the ill effects of it general; it was a drought upon the mountains, which lying high were first affected with it; the mountains were their pasture grounds, and used to be covered over with flocks, but now there is no grass for them: It was upon the corn, the new wine, and the oil, all failed through the extremity of the hot weather, even all that the ground brought forth, it was all withered; Nay, it had an ill influence upon men; the hot weather enfeebled some, and made them weary and fainty and spent their spirits; it inflamed others, and put them into fevers. It should seem it brought diseases upon cattle too. In short, it spoiled all the labour of their hands, which they hoped to eat of, and maintain their families by. Note. Meat for the belly is meat that perissheth, and if we labour for that only, we are in danger of losing our labour; but are sure our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, if we labour for the meat which endures to eternal life: for the hand of the diligent, in the business of religion, will infallibly make rich, whereas in the business of this life, the most solicitous and the most industrious often lose the labour of their hands. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. (2.) He that giveth bread to the eater denied his blessing upon the bread they eat, and then that did not nourish them. The cause of the withering and failing of the corn in the field was visible, it was for want of rain; but besides that there was a secret blast and curse attending that which they brought home. (1.) When they had it in the barn, they were not sure of it: I did blow upon it, saith the Lord of hosts, *ver. 9.* and that withered it, as buds are sometimes blasted in the spring by a nipping frost, which we see the effects of, but know not the way of. I did blow it away, so the margin reads it. When men have heaped wealth together God can scatter it with the breath of his mouth, as easily as we can blow away a feather. Note. We can never be sure of any thing in this world, it is exposed not only when it is in the field, but when it is housed; for there moth and rust corrupt, *Matt. vi. 19.* And if we would have the comfort and continuance of our temporal enjoyments we must make God our friend, for if he bless them to us they are blessings indeed; but if he blow upon them we can expect no good from them, they make themselves wings and fly away. (2.) When we had it upon the board it was not that to them that they expected. Ye eat, but have not enough, either because the meat is wastily and not satisfying, or because the stomach is greedy and not satisfied; you eat, but you have no good digestion, and so are not nourished by it, nor doth it answer the end, or you have not enough, because you are not content, nor think it enough. Ye drink, but are not cooled and refreshed by it, ye are not filled with drink; you are flinted and have not enough to quench your thirst. The new wine is cut off from your mouth, *Joel i. 5.* nay, and you drink your water too by measure and with astonishment; you have no comfort of it, because you have no plenty of it, but are still in fear of falling short. (3.) That which they had upon their backs did them no good there; ye clothe you, but there is none warm, your clothes soon wear out and wax old and grow thin, because God blows upon them, contrary to what Israel's did in the wilderness when God blessed them. It is God that makes our garments warm upon us, when he quieteth the earth, *Job xxxvii. 17.* (4.) That which they had in their bags, which was not laid out, but laid up, yet they were not sure of it; he that earns wages, by hard labour, and has it paid him in ready current money, yet puts it into a bag with holes, it drops through and wastes away infensibly. Every thing is so scarce and dear, that they spend their money as fast as they get it. Those that lay up their treasure on earth, put it into a bag with holes, they lose it as they go along, and they that come after them pick it up: But if we lay up our treasure in heaven, we provide for ourselves bags that wax not old, *Luke xvii. 33.*

(2.) Observe wherefore God thus contended with them, and stopped the current of those favours promised them at their return, (*Joel ii. 24*) they provoked him to do it; *It is because of my house that is waste.* That is the quarrel God has with them; the foundation of the temple is laid, but the building doth not go on; Every man runs to his own house to finish that, and to make that convenient and fine, and no care is taken about the Lord's house; and therefore it is that God crosseth you thus in all your affairs, to testify his displeasure against you for that neglect, and to bring you to a sense of your sin and folly. Note. As those that seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, shall not only find them, but are most likely to have other things added to them, so they who neglect and postpone those things, will not only lose them, but will justly have other things taken away from them. And if God cross us in our temporal affairs, and we meet with trouble and disappointment, we shall find this is the cause of it; the work we have to do for God and our own souls is left undone, and we seek our own things more than the things of Jesus Christ, *Phil. ii. 21.*

(3.) The reproof which the prophet gives them for their neglect of the temple work, *ver. 4.* Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, to have them beautified and adorned, and your families settled in them? They were not content with walls and roofs for necessity, but they must have for gaiety and fancy; it is high time, saith one, that my house was wain-facted, and high time, saith another, that mine were painted; and God's house all this time lies waste, and nothing is done at it. What, saith the prophet, is it time you should have your humour pleased, and not time you should have your God pleased? How was their disposition the reverse of David's, who could not be easy in his house of cedar, while the ark of God was in curtains, *2 Sam. vii. 2.* and of Solomon, who built the temple of God before he built a palace for himself. Note. Those are very much strangers to their own interest that prefer the conveniences and ornaments of the temporal life before the absolute necessities of the spiritual life, that are full of care to enrich their own houses while God's temple in their hearts lies waste, and nothing is done for it, or in it.

4. The good counsel which the prophet gives to them who thus despised God, and whom God was therefore justly displeased with.

1. He would have them reflect. Now therefore consider your ways, *ver. 5.* and again, *ver. 7.* Be sensible of the hand of God gone out against you and enquire into the reason; think what you have done, that has provoked God thus to break in upon your comforts; and think what you will do to testify your repentance, that God return in mercy to you. Note. It is the great concern of every one of us, to consider our ways; to set our hearts to our ways, so the word is, to think on my ways, *Psal. cxxix. 59.* to search and try them, *Lam. iii. 40.* to ponder the path of our feet, *Prov. iv. 26.* to apply our minds with all seriousness to the great and necessary duty of self-examination; and communing with our own hearts concerning our spiritual-state, our sins that are past, and our duty for the future; for sin is what we must answer for, duty is what we must do, about these therefore we must be inquisitive, rather than about events which we must leave to God. Many are quick-sighted to pry into other people's ways, that are very careless of their own; whereas our concern is to prove every one his own work, *Gal. vi. 4.*

2. He would have them reform, *ver. 8.* Go up to the mountains, to Lebanon, and bring wood, and other materials that are wanting, and build the house with all speed, put it off no longer, but set to it in good earnest. Note. Our considering of our ways must issue in our amending of whatever we find amiss in them. If any duty has been long neglected, that is not a reason why it should still be so, but why now at length it should be revived; better late than never. And for their encouragement to apply themselves in



good earnest to this work, he assures them, "(1.) That they should be accepted of him in it. *Build the house and I will take pleasure in it*; and that was encouragement enough to apply themselves to it with alacrity and resolution, and to go through with it whatever it cost them. Note, Whatever God will take pleasure in when it is done, we ought to take pleasure in the doing of, and to reckon that inducement enough to set about it, and go on with it in good earnest; for what greater satisfaction can we have in our own bosoms, than in contributing any thing towards that which God will take pleasure in? It ought to have been the top of our ambition to be accepted of the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 9. Though they had foolishly neglected the house of God, yet if at length they will resume the care of it, God will not remember against them their former neglects, but will take pleasure in the work of their hands. Those that have long deferred their return to God, if at length they return with all their heart, must not despair of his favour. (2.) That he would be honoured by them in it. *I will be glorified, saith the Lord*. He will be served and worshipped in the temple when it is built and sanctified in them that come nigh to him. It is worth while to bestow all possible care and pains, and cost, upon that by which God may be glorified.

12. ¶ Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet (as the LORD their God had sent him) and the people did fear before the LORD. 13. Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger, in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, *I am with you, saith the LORD*. 14. And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people, and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God: 15. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

As an ear-ring of gold, (saith Solomon) and an ornament of fine gold, so amiable, so acceptable in the sight of God and man, is a wife reprove upon an obedient ear. Prov. xxi. 12. The prophet here was a wife but faithful reprove in God's name, and he met with an obedient ear. The foregoing sermon met with the desired success among the people, and that met with due encouragement from God. Observe,

1. How the people returned to God in a way of duty. All those to whom that sermon was preached, received the word in the love of it, and were wrought upon by it. Zerubbabel the chief governor did not think himself above the check and command of God's word: he was a man that had been eminently useful in his day, and serviceable to the interest of the church, yet did not plead his former merits in answer to this reproof for his present remissness, but submitted to it. Joshua's business as high priest was to teach, and yet he was willing himself to be taught, and willingly received admonition and instruction. The remnant of the people (and the whole body of them was but a remnant, a very few of the many thousands of Israel) they also were very pliable, they all obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and bowed their neck to the yoke of his commands: and it is here recorded to their honour, ver. 12. Their father said, *Sons go to work to day in my vineyard*, in my temple, and they not only say, We go, sir; but they went immediately.

(1.) They looked upon the prophet to be the Lord's messenger, and the word he delivered to be the Lord's message to them: and therefore received it, not as the word of man, but as the word of Almighty God; they obeyed his words, as the Lord their God had sent him, ver. 12. Note, In attending to God's ministers we must have an eye to him that sent them, and receive them for his sake, while they act according to their commission.

(2.) They did fear before the Lord. Prophecy was a new thing with them, they had no special messenger from heaven of a great while, and therefore now they had one, and but one, they paid an extraordinary regard to him; whereas their fathers, that had many prophets, mocked and misused them. It is sometimes so, when good preaching is most scarce, it does most good: whereas the manna that is rained in plenty is loathed as light bread. And because they so readily received this prophet, within a month or two after, God raised them up another, Zech. i. 1. They feared before the Lord, i. e. they had a great regard to the divine authority, and a great dread of the divine wrath, and were of those that trembled at God's word. The judgments of God they had been under, though very severe, had not prevailed to make them fear before the Lord, until the word of God was sent to expound his providences, and then they feared; then when they saw their own sin the cause of those judgments, then they feared. Note, A holy fear of God will have a great influence upon our obedience to him. *Serve the Lord with fear*; if we fear him not, we shall not serve him.

(3.) The Lord stirred up their spirits, ver. 14. (1.) He excited them to their duty and put it into their hearts to go about it. Note, Then the word of God has its success, when God by his grace stirs up our spirits to comply with it; and without that grace we should remain stupid, and utterly averse to every thing that is good. It is in the day of a divine power that we are made willing. (2.) He encouraged them in their duty, and with those encouragements enlarged their hearts. Psal. cxix. 32. When they heard thy word they feared; but lest they should sink under the weight of that fear, God stirred them up, and made them cheerful and bold to encounter the difficulties they might meet with. Note, When God has work to do he will either find or make men fit to do it, and stir them up to it.

(4.) They applied themselves to their work, with all possible vigour, *They came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts their God*; every one, according as his capacity or ability was, lent a hand some way or other to further that good work, and this they did with an eye to God as the Lord of hosts, and as their God, the God of Israel. The consideration of God's sovereign dominion in the world by his providence, and his covenant relation to his people by his grace, should stir up our spirits to act for him, and for the advancement of the interest of his kingdom among men, to the utmost of our power.

(5.) They did this speedily; it was but on the first day of the sixth month that Haggai preached them this sermon, and by the twenty-fourth of the same month, little more than three weeks after, they were all busy working in the house of the Lord their God, ver. 15. To shew that they were ashamed of their delays hitherto, now they were convinced and called, they were resolved to delay no longer, but strike while the iron was hot; and set about the work while they were under convictions. Note, Those that have lost time, have need to redeem time; and the longer we have loitered in that

which is good, when we are convinced of our folly, the more haste we should make.

How God met them in a way of mercy. The same prophet that brought them the reproof, brought them a very comforting, encouraging word, ver. 13. Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message, in his name, and as from him, saying, *I am with you, saith the Lord*. That is all he has to say, and that is enough; as the word of Christ to his disciples is, Mat. xxviii. 20. *Lo, I am with you alway even to the end of the world*. *I am with you*, i. e. I will forgive your neglects hitherto, and they shall not be remembered against you, I will remove the judgments you have been under for those neglects, and will appear for you, as I have in them appeared against you. *I am with you*, to protect you against your enemies that bear ill will to your work, and to prosper you, and to give you success in it: with you, to strengthen your hands, and bless the work of them, without which blessing they labour in vain that build. Note, Those that work for God, have God with them; and if he be for us, who can be against us? If he be with us, what difficulty can stand before us?

## CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have three sermons preached by the prophet Haggai for the encouragement of those that are forward to build the temple. In the first, he assures the builders that the glory of this house they were now building should, in spiritual respects though not in outward, exceed that of Solomon's temple, in which he has an eye to the coming of Christ, ver. 1—9. In the second, he assures them, that though their sin in delaying to build the temple had retarded the prosperous progress of all their other affairs, yet now they had set about it in good earnest, he would bless them and give them success, ver. 10—19. In the third, he assures Zerubbabel, that as a reward of his pious zeal and activity herein, he should be a favourite of heaven, and one of the ancestors of Messiah the prince, whose kingdom should be set up on the ruins of all opposing powers, ver. 20—23.

I. IN the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, 2. Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, 3. Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? 4. Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD: and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest: and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD, of hosts, 5. According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. 6. For thus saith the LORD of hosts: yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: 7. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. 8. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts: 9. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

Here is, 1. The date of this message, ver. 1. It was sent on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, when the builders had been about a month at work (since the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month) and had got it in some forwardness. Note, Those that are hearty in the service of God, shall receive fresh encouragements from him to proceed in it, as their case calls for them. Set the wheels a going, and God will oil them.

2. The direction of this message, ver. 2. The encouragements here are sent to the same persons to whom the reproofs in the foregoing chapter are directed; for they that are wounded by the convictions of the word shall be healed and bound up by its consolations. Speak to Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the residue of the people, the very same that obeyed the voice of the Lord, chap. i. 12. and whose spirits God stirred up to do so, chap. i. 14. to them are sent these words of comfort.

3. The message itself. In which observe, 1. The discouragements which they laboured under that were employed in this work, that which was such a damp upon them, and an alloy to their joy when the foundation of the temple was laid, was still a clog upon them that they could not build such a temple now as Solomon built, not so large, so stately, so sumptuous a one as that was. This fetched tears from the eyes of many, when the dimensions of it were first laid, Ezra iii. 12. and still it made the work go on heavily, and the glory of this house, in comparison with that of the former, was as nothing, ver. 3. It was now about seventy years since Solomon's temple was destroyed, (for that was in the nineteenth year of the captivity, and this about the nineteenth after the captivity,) so that there might be some yet alive that could remember to have seen it, and still they would be upbraiding themselves and their brethren with the great disparity between this house and that; one could remember the gold with which it was overlaid; another the precious stones with which it was garnished; one could describe the magnificence of the porch, another of the pillars, and where are these now? This weakened the hands of the builders, for though our gracious God is pleased with us if we do in sincerity as well as we can in his service, yet our proud hearts will scarce let us be pleased with ourselves unless we do as well as others, whose abilities far exceed ours. And it is sometimes the fault of old people to discourage the services of the present age, by crying up too much the performances and attainments of the former age; with which others should be provoked to emulation, but not exposed to contempt. Say not thou, that the former days were better than these, Eccles. vii. 10 but thank God that there is any good in these, as bad as they are.

2. The encouragement that is given them to go on in the work notwithstanding, ver. 4. Yet now, though this house is likely to be much inferior to the former, yet be strong, O Zerubbabel, and be strong, O Joshua: let not these leading men give way to this suggestion, or be disheartened by it, but do as well as they can, when they cannot do so well as they would; and let all the people of the land be strong too, and work; and if the leaders have



have but a good heart on it, it is hoped the followers will have the better heart. Note, Those that work for God ought to exert themselves with vigour, and then to encourage themselves with hope that it will end well.

3. The grounds of these encouragements; God himself faith to them, *Fear ye not*, ver. 5. and gives good reason for it.

1. They have God with them, his Spirit and his special presence. *Be strong, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts*, ver. 4. This he had said before, chap. i. 13. *I am with you*. But we need to have these assurances repeated that we may have strong consolation. The presence of God with us, as the *Lord of hosts*, is enough to silence all our fears, and to help us over all the discouragements we may meet with in the way of our duty. The Jews had *hosts* against them, but they had the *Lord of hosts* with them to take their part and plead their cause. He is *with them*, for, (1.) He adheres to his promise; his covenant is inviolable; and he will be always theirs, and will appear and act for them, *according to the word that he covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt*. Though he chasten their transgressions with the rod, yet he will not make his faithfulness to fail. (2.) He dwells among them by his spirit, the Spirit of prophecy: when he first formed them into a people, he gave his good Spirit to instruct them, Neh. ix. 20. and still the Spirit, though often grieved and provoked to withdraw, *remaineth among them*. It was the Spirit of God that stirred up their spirits to come out of Babylon, Ezra i. 5. and now to build the temple, Hag. i. 14. Note, We have reason to be encouraged, as long as we have the Spirit of God remaining among us to *work upon us*, for so long we have God with us to *work for us*.

2. They shall have the *Messiah* among them, shortly, he that *should come*. To him bare all the prophets witness, and this prophet particularly here, ver. 6. 7. Here is an intimation of the time of his coming, that it would not be long ere he came; yet once, *it is a little while*, and he shall come. The Old Testament church has but one stage more (if we may say so) to travel; five stages were now past, from Adam and Noah, thence to Abraham, thence to Moses, thence to Solomon's temple, thence to the captivity, and now yet one stage more, its sixth day's journey, and then comes the sabbatism of the *Messiah's* kingdom. Let the Son of man when he comes find faith on the earth, and let the children of promise continue still looking for him; for now it is but a *little while* and he will come; *hold out faith and patience* yet awhile, for he that *shall come, will come, and will not tarry*. And as he yet said of his first appearance, so now of his second, *Surely I come quickly*.

Now concerning his coming it is here foretold

(1.) That it shall be introduced by a general shaking, ver. 6. *I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land*. This is applied to the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, to make way for which, he will *judge among the heathen*. Psal. ex. 6. God will once again do for his church, as he did when he brought them out of Egypt, when he shook the heavens and earth at mount Sinai; with the thunder and lightnings and earthquakes shook the sea and the dry land, when lanes were made through the sea, and streams fetched out of the rock: this shall be done again, when at the sufferings of Christ the sun shall be darkened, the earth shaken, the rocks rent; when at the birth of Christ Herod and all Jerusalem are troubled; Matt. ii. 3. and he is set for the fall and rising again of many. When his kingdom was set up, it was with a shock to the nations, the oracles were silenced, idols were destroyed, and the powers of the kingdoms were moved and removed. Heb. xii. 27. It speaks the removing of the things that are shaken. Note, The shaking of the nations is often in order to the setting of the church, and the establishing of the things that cannot be shaken.

(2.) That it shall issue in a general satisfaction. He shall come, as the desire of all nations, desirable to all nations, for in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed, with the best of blessings, that had been long expected and desired by the good people in all nations, that had any intelligence from the Old Testament predictions concerning him. Balaam in the land of Moab had spoken of a star that should arise out of Jacob, and Job in the land of Uz, of his living redeemer; the concourse of devout men from all parts of Jerusalem, Acts ii. 5. was in expectation of the setting up of the *Messiah's* kingdom about that time. All the nations that are brought into Christ, and disciples in his name, have called him and will call him, *all their salvation and all their desire*. This glorious title of Christ seems to refer to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. xlix. 10. that to him shall the gathering of the people be.

3. The house they were now building shall be filled with glory to that degree, as that its glory shall exceed that of Solomon's temple. The enemies of the Jews followed them with reproach, and cast contempt upon the house they were building; but they might very well endure that when God undertook to fill it with glory. It is God's prerogative to fill with glory; the glory that comes from him is satisfying, and not vain glory. Moses's tabernacle and Solomon's temple were filled with glory, when God in a cloud took possession of them; but this house shall be filled with glory of another nature.

1. Let them not be concerned that this house had not so much silver and gold about it as Solomon's temple had, ver. 8. God needs not the silver and gold to adorn his temple, for (saith he) *The silver is mine and the gold is mine*; all the silver and gold in the world is his; all that is hid in the bowels of the earth, for *the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*. All that is laid up in the exchequers, banks, and treasures of the children of men, and all that circulators for the maintaining of trade and commerce; it is all the Lord's. Every penny bears his image as well as Caesar's; and therefore when gold and silver are dedicated to his honour and employed in his service, no addition is made to him, for it was his before. When David and his princes offered vast sums for the service of the house of God, they acknowledge, *it is all thine own; and of thine own, Lord have we given thee*, 1 Chron. xxix. 14—16. Therefore God needs not sacrifice, for *every beast of the forest is his*, Psal. l. 10. Note, if we have silver and gold we must serve and honour God with it, for it is all his own, we have but the use of it, the property remains in him; but if we have not silver and gold to honour God with, we must honour him with such as we have, and he will accept us, for he needs it not; all the silver and gold in the world is his already. *The earth is full of his riches, so is the great and wide sea also*.

2. Let them be comforted with this, that though this temple had less gold in it, it should have more glory than Solomon's, ver. 9. *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former*. This was never true in respect of outward glory, this latter house was indeed in its latter times very much beautified and enriched by Herod, and we find the disciples admiring the stones and buildings of the temple, how fine they were, Mark xiii. 1. but it was nothing in comparison with Solomon's temple; and besides, the Jews own, that there were several of the divine glories of the first temple that were wanting in this, the Ark, the Urim and Thummim, the fire from heaven, and the *Shechinah*; so that we cannot conceive how the glory of this latter house should in any thing exceed that of the former, but in that which would indeed excel all the glories of the first house, the presence of the *Messiah* in it, the Son of God, his being presented there, the glory of his

people Israel, his attending there at twelve years old, and afterwards his preaching and working miracles there, and his driving the buyers and sellers out of it. It was necessary then that the *Messiah* should come while that second temple stood, but that being long since destroyed, we must conclude that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, is he that *should come*, and we are to look for no other. It was also the glory of this latter house, (1.) That before the coming of Christ it was always kept free from idols and idolatries, and was never polluted with those abominable things, as the first temple often was, (1 Kings xxiii. 11, 12.) and in this its glory excelled all the glory of that. Note, The purity of the church, and the strict adherence to divine institutions, is much more its glory than external pomp and splendor. (2.) That after Christ, the gospel was preached in it by the apostles, even all the words of this life, Acts v. 20. *In the temple Jesus Christ was daily preached*, Acts v. 42. Now the ministration of righteousness and life by the gospel was unspeakably more glorious than the law, which was a ministration of death and condemnation, 2 Cor. iii. 4—10. Note, That is the most valuable of glory which ariseth from our relation to Christ, and our interest in him. As where Christ is, behold a greater than Solomon is there, so the heart in which he dwells and makes a living temple, behold it is more glorious than Solomon's temple, and will be so to eternity.

3. They should see a comfortable end of their present troubles, and enjoy the pleasure of a happy settlement. *In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts*. Note, God's presence with his people in his ordinances secures to them all good. If God be with us, peace is with us. But the Jews under the latter temple had so much trouble, that we must conclude this promise to have its accomplishment in that spiritual peace, which Jesus Christ has by his blood purchased for, and by his last will and testament bequeathed to all believers, John xiv. 27. that peace which Christ himself preached as the prophet of peace, and gives as the prince of peace. God will give peace in this place, i. e. he will give his Son to be the peace, Eph. ii. 14.

10. ¶ In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 11. Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, 12. If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. 13. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. 14. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD? and so is every work of their hands: and that which they offer there is unclean. 15. And now I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: 16. Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures there were but ten: when one came to the press-fit for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. 17. ¶ I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD. 18. Consider now from this day and upward; from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider it. 19. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.

This sermon was preached two months after that in the former part of the chapter. The priests and Levites preached constantly, but the prophets preached occasionally; both were good and needful; we have need to be taught our duty in season and out of season. The people were now going on vigorously with the building of the temple, and in hopes shortly to have it ready for their use, and to be employed in the services of it, and now God sends them a message by his prophet which would be of use to them.

1. By way of conviction and caution. They were now engaged in a very good work, but they are concerned to see to it, not only that it be good for the matter of it, but that it be done in a right manner, for otherwise it would not be accepted of God. God sees there are many among them that spoil this good work, by going about it with unsanctified hearts and hands, and are likely to gain no advantage to themselves by it; these are here convicted, and all are warned thereby to purify the hands they employ in this work, for to the pure only all things are pure, and from the pure only that comes which is pure. This matter is here illustrated by the established rules of the ceremonial law, in putting a difference between the clean and the unclean, about which many of the appointments of the law were conversant. Hereby it appears that a spiritual use is to be made of the ceremonial law, and that it was intended not only as a divine ritual to the Jews, but for instruction in righteousness to all, even to us upon whom the ends of the world are come to discover to us both sin and carnal, both our disease and our remedy. Now observe here,

(1.) What the rule of the law was. The prophet is ordered to enquire of the priest concerning it, ver. 11. for their lips should keep this knowledge, and the people should enquire the law at their mouth, Mai. ii. 7. Haggai himself, though a prophet, must ask the priest concerning the law. His business as an extraordinary messenger, was to expound the providences of God and to give directions concerning particular duties as he had done, chap. i. 8, 9. But he would not take the priest's work out of their hands that were the ordinary ministers, and whose business it was to expound the ordinances of God, and to teach the people the meaning of them; and to give the general rules for the observation of them. In a case of that nature, Haggai must himself consult them. Note, God has given to his ministers diversities of gifts, and calls them out to do diversities of services, so they that have need one of another, should make use one of another, and be helpful one to another. The prophet, though divinely inspired, cannot say to the priest, I have no need of thee, nor can the priest say so to the prophet. Perhaps Haggai was therefore ordered to consult the priests, that out of their own mouths he might judge both them and the people committed



mitted to their charge, and convict them of worse than a ceremonial pollution. See *Lec. x. 10, 11.*

Now the rules of the law in the cases propounded, are,

1. That he that has *holy flesh* in his clothes, cannot by the touch of his clothes communicate holiness. ver. 12. *If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, though the garment is thereby so far made a devoted thing, as that it is not to be put to common use, till it has first been washed in the holy place, Lev. vi. 27. yet it shall by no means transmit a holiness to either meat or drink, so as to make them ever the better to those that use them.*

2. That he that is ceremonially unclean by the touch of a dead body, doth by his touch communicate that uncleanness. The law is express, *Num. xix. 22. Whosoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean*, yet this Haggai will have from the priest's own mouth; for concerning those things that we find very plain in our Bible, yet it is good to have the advice of our ministers. The sum of these two rules is, that pollution is easier communicated than sanctification; that is (saith Grotius) there are many ways of vice, but only one of virtue, and that a difficult one. *Bonum oritur ex integris, malum ex quolibet defectu.* Let not men think that living among good people will recommend them to God, if they be not good themselves, but let them fear that touching the unclean thing will defile them, and therefore let them keep at a distance from it.

(2.) How it is here applied, ver. 14. *So is this people, and so is this nation before me.* He doth not call them his people and his nation, they are unworthy to be owned by him, but this people and this nation; they have been thus before God; they thought their offering sacrifices on the altar would sanctify them, and excuse their neglect to build the temple, and remove the curse which by that neglect they had brought upon their common enjoyments; no, saith God, your holy flesh and your altar will be so far from sanctifying your meat and drink, your wine and oil to you, that your contempt of God's temple will bring a pollution not only on your common enjoyments, but even on your sacrifices too; so that while you continued in that neglect all was unclean to you, nay, and so is this people still; and so they will be; on these terms they will stand with me, and on no other, that if they be profane and sensual, and morally impure, if they have wicked hearts and lived wicked lives, though they work never so hard at the temple while it is building, and though they offer never so many and costly sacrifices there when it is built, yet that shall not serve to sanctify their meat and drink to them, and to give them a comfortable use of it; nay, the impurity of their hearts and lives shall make even that work of their hands, and all their offerings unclean, and an abomination to God. And the case is the same with us. They whose devotions are plausible, but their conversations wicked, will find their devotions unable to sanctify their enjoyments, but their wickedness prevailing to pollute them. Note, When we are employed in any good work we should be jealous over ourselves, lest we render it unclean by our corruptions and mismanagements.

2. By way of comfort and encouragement. If their hearts be right with God, and their eye single in his service, they shall have the benefit of it; God will take away the judgment of famine wherewith they have been corrected for their remissness, and will restore them great plenty. This they are called to consider, and to observe whether God would not be to the utmost as good as his word, and by his providence remarkably countenance and recompence their reformation in this matter. To make this the more signal, let them set down the day when they began to work at the building of the temple, to raise the structure upon the foundations that had been laid some time before. On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, they began to prepare materials, chap. i. 5. and now on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month they began to lay a stone upon a stone in the temple of the Lord; let them take notice of this day, and observe,

1. How they were gone behind-hand in their estates before this day. Let them remember the time when there was a sensible waste and decay in all they had, ver. 16. A man came to his garner expecting to find a heap of twenty measures of corn, so much he used to have from such a piece of ground, or so much used to be left at that time of the year, or so much he took it for granted there was when he fetched the last from it, but he found it unaccountably diminished, and when he came to measure it, there were but ten measures; it was run in, and dried away in the keeping; or vermin had eaten it, or it was stolen. In like manner he went to the wine press, expecting to draw fifty vessels of wine, for so much he used to have from such a quantity of grapes, but they did not yield as usual, for he could get but twenty. This agrees with what we had, chap. i. 9. *I looked for much and it came to little.* Note, It is our folly that we are apt to raise our expectation from the creature, and to think to-morrow must needs be as this day, and much more abundant, but we are commonly disappointed, and the more we expect the more grievous the disappointment is. In the stores and treasures of the new covenant we need not fear being disappointed when we come by faith to draw from them.

But this was not all, God did visibly contend with them in the weather, ver. 17. *I smote you with blastings, winds and frosts, which made every green thing to wither, and with mildew which choked the corn when it was knitting, and with hail which battered it down and broke it, when it was grown to some maturity; thus they were balked in all the labour of their hands, while they neglected to lay their hand to the work of God, and to labour in that.* Note, While we take no care of God's interest, we cannot expect he should take care of ours. And when he thus walks contrary to us, he expects that we should return to him and to our duty. But his people either saw not the hand of God in it, imputing it to chance, or saw not their own sin, the provoking cause of it, and therefore turned not to him. They were a long time incorrigible, and unhumiliated under these rebukes, so that God's hand was stretched out still, for the people turned not to him that smote them, Isa. ix. 12, 13. They might easily observe, that as long as they continued in neglect of the temple work, all their affairs went backward. But,

2. Let them now observe, and they should find that from this day forward God would bless them, ver. 18, 19. *Consider now, whether when you begin to change your way towards God, you do not find God changing this way towards you; from this day when you fall to work about the temple, consider it, I say, and you shall find a remarkable turn given for the better to all your affairs. Is the seed yet in the barn; Yes it is, and not yet thrown into the ground; the fruit-trees do not as yet bud, the vine and the fig-tree, and the olive tree, have not as yet brought forth, so that nothing appears to promise a good harvest and vintage next year; nature doth not promise it: but now you begin to apply yourselves in good earnest to your duty, the God of nature promiseth it; he hath said, from this day I will bless you.* It is the best day's work you ever did in your lives, for from hence you may date the return of your prosperity. He doth not say what they shall be, but in general, *I will bless you; and those that know*

what are the fruits flowing from God's blessing know they can desire no more to make them happy. *I will bless you, and then you shall soon recover all your losses; shall thrive as fast as before you went backward; for the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich, and those whom he blesteth are blessed indeed.* Note, when we begin to make conscience of our duty to God we may expect his blessing: and this tree of life is so known by its fruits, that one may discern almost to a day a remarkable turn of providence in favour of those that return in a way of duty: so that they and others may say, *from this day they are blessed.* See *Mal. iii. 10.* And *who so is wise will observe these things, and understand by them the loving-kindness of the Lord.*

20. ¶ And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying. 21. Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will destroy the heavens and the earth: 22. And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen: and I will overthrow the chariots and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. 23. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

After Haggai's sermon *ad populum*, here follows one the same day *ad magistratum*; a word directed particularly to Zerubbabel the governor of Judah, who was a leading active man in this good work the people now set about, and therefore he shall have some particular marks put upon him, ver. 21. *Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, speak to him by himself, he hath thoughts in his head far above those of the common people, as wise princes use to have, that move in a higher and larger sphere than others.* The people of the land are in care about their corn-fields and vineyards, God has assured them that they shall prosper, and we hope that will make them easy; but Zerubbabel is concerned about the community and the interests of that, about the neighbour nations, and the revolutions of their governments, and what will become of the few and feeble Jews in those changes and convulsions, and how such a poor prince as he is should be able to keep his ground and serve his country. Go to him, saith God, and tell him it shall be well with him and his remnant, and let that make him easy.

1. Let him expect to hear of great commotions in the nations of the earth, and let them not be a surprise to him; behold he is told of them before. ver. 21, 22. *I will shake the heavens and the earth.* This he had said before, ver. 6, 7. and now saith it again to Zerubbabel: let him expect shaking times, universal concussion; the world is like the sea, like the wheel, always in motion, but sometimes in a special manner turbulent. But blessed be God if the earth be shaken, it is to *shake the wicked out of it.* Job xxxviii. 13. In the apocalyptic visions earthquakes bode no ill to the church. Here the heavens and the earth are shaken, that proud oppressors may be broken and brought down; *I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms.* The Chaldean monarchy, that had been the throne of kingdoms a great while, was already overthrown, and the powers that are, and are yet to come, shall in like manner be overthrown; their day will come to fall. (1.) Though they be never so powerful, the strength of their kingdoms shall be destroyed: they trust in chariots and horses, *Mal. xx. 7.* but their chariots shall be overthrown, and those that ride them, so that they shall not be able to attack the people of God whom they persecute, or to escape the judgments of God which persecute them. (2.) Though there appear none likely to be the instruments of their destruction, yet God will bring it about, for they shall be brought down, *every one by the sword of his brother.* This reads the doom of all the enemies of God's church, that will not repent to give him glory; it seems likewise designed as a promise of Christ's victory over the powers of darkness: his overthrow of Satan's throne, that throne of kingdoms, the throne of the god of this world; the taking from him all the armour wherein he trusted, and dividing the spoil. And all opposing rule, principality and power, shall be put down, that the kingdom may be delivered up to God, even the father.

2. Let him depend upon it, that he shall be safe under the divine protection, in the midst of all these commotions, ver. 23. Zerubbabel was active to build God a house, and therefore God makes the same promise to him as he did to David on the like occasion, that he would build him a house, and establish it, even in that day when heaven and earth are shaken; this promise refers to this good man himself and to his family. He honoured God, and God would honour him; his successors likewise in the government of Judah might take encouragement from it; though their authority was very precarious as to men, yet God would confirm it, and this would contribute to the stability of the people over whom God had set them. But this promise hath special reference to Christ, who lineally descended from Zerubbabel, and is the sole builder of the gospel temple. (1.) Zerubbabel is here owned as God's servant, and it is an honourable mention that is hereby made of him, as Moses and David *my servants.* When God destroys his enemies, he will prefer his servants. Our Lord Jesus is his father's servant in the work of redemption, but faithful as a son, *Isa. xlii. 1.* (2.) He is owned as God's elect, *I have chosen thee* into this office; and whom God makes choice of, he will make use of. Our Lord Jesus is chosen of God, *1 Pet. ii. 4.* And he is the head of the chosen remnant, in him they are chosen. (3.) It is promised that being chosen, God will make him as a signet. Jeconiah had been as the signet on God's right hand, but was plucked thence, *Jer. xxii. 24.* and now Zerubbabel is substituted in the room of him. He shall be near and dear to God, precious in his sight and honourable, and his family shall continue till the Messiah spring out of it, who is the signet on God's right hand; this speaks (1.) The delight the Father has in him; in him he once and again declared himself to be well pleased. He is set as a seal upon his heart, a seal upon his arm, is brought near unto him, *Dan. vii. 13.* is *hid in the shadow of his hand*, *Isa. xlix. 2.* (2.) The dominion the Father has intrusted him with. Princes sign their edicts, grants, and commissions, with their signet rings, *Esther iii. 10.* Our Lord Jesus is the signet on God's right hand, for all power is given to him, and derived from him. By him the great charter of the gospel is signed and ratified, and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen.



AN  
E X P O S I T I O N,  
WITH  
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,  
Upon the Book of the PROPHET  
**ZECHARIAH.**

This prophet was colleague with the prophet Haggai, and a worker together with him in forwarding the building of the second temple, *Ezra v. 1.* for two are better than one: Christ sent forth his disciples two and two. Zechariah began to prophesy some time after Haggai. But he continued longer, soared higher in visions and revelations, wrote more, and prophesied more particularly concerning Christ than Haggai had done; so *the last shall be first*: the last in time sometimes proves first in dignity. He begins with a plain practical sermon, expressive of that which was the scope of his prophesying in the five first verses, but afterwards to the end of *chap. vi.* he relates the visions he saw, and the instructions he received immediately from heaven by them. At *chap. vii.* from an inquiry made by the Jews concerning fasting, he takes occasion to shew them the duty of their present day, and to encourage them to hope for God's favour, to the end of *chap. viii.* After which there are two sermons, which are both called *burdens of the word of the Lord*, one begins with *chap. ix.* the other with *chap. xii.* which probably were preached some time after; the scope of which is to reprove for sin, and threatens God's judgments against the impenitent, and to encourage those that feared God with assurance of mercy God had in store for his church, and especially of the coming of the Messiah and the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

CHAP. I.

*In this chapter, after the introduction, ver. 1. we have, (1.) An awakening call to a sinful people to repent of their sins and return to God, ver. 2—6. (2.) Great encouragement given to hope for mercy. (1.) By the vision of horses, ver. 7—11. (2.) By the prayer of the angel for Jerusalem, and the answer to that prayer, ver. 12—17. (3.) By the vision of the four carpenters that were employed to cut off the four horns, with which Judah and Jerusalem were scattered, ver. 18—21.*

1. **I**N the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying. 2. The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. 3. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. 4. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD. 5. Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? 6. But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

Here is, 1. The foundation of Zechariah's ministry; it is laid in a divine authority. *The word of the Lord came to him.* He received a divine commission to be God's mouth to the people, and with it instructions what to say. He received of the Lord that which also he delivered unto them. The word of the Lord was to him, it came in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, as a real thing, and not a fancy. For the ascertaining of this we have here,

1. The time when the word of the Lord came first to him, or, when the word that next follows came to him: It was in the second year of Darius. Before the captivity the prophets dated their writings by the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel: but now by the reigns of the kings of Persia, to whom they were subjects. Such a melancholy change had sin made of their circumstances. Zerubbabel took not so much upon him as to have public acts dated by the years of his government: And in things of this nature the prophets, as is fit, complied with the usage of the time, and scrupled not to reckon by the years of the heathen kings, as *Dan. vii. 1.—viii. 2.* Zechariah preached his first sermon in the eighth month of this second year of Darius; Haggai preached his in the sixth month of the same year, *Hag. i. 1.* The people being readily obedient to the word of the Lord in the mouth of Haggai, God blessed them with another prophet; for to him that hath, and useth well what he has, more shall be given.

2. The name and family of the prophet to whom the word of the Lord came. He was Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo, and he was the prophet; as Haggai is called the prophet, *Hag. i. 1.* For though in former ages, there was one Iddo a prophet, *2 Chron. xii. 12.* yet we have no reason to think that Zechariah was of his progeny, or should be denominated from him. The learned Mr. Penble is clear of opinion, that this Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, is the same that our Saviour saith was slain between the temple and the altar, perhaps many years after the rebuilding of the temple, *Matt. xxiii. 35.* and that our Saviour doth not mean (as is commonly thought) Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, for why should Jehoiada be called Barachiah? And he thinks the manner of Christ's account persuades us to think so: for reckoning up the innocent blood shed by the

Jews, he begins at Abel, and ends even in the last of the holy prophets. Whereas after Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, many prophets and righteous men were put to death by them. It is true there is no mention made in any history of their slaying this Zechariah, but Josephus might industriously conceal that shame of his nation. Perhaps what Zechariah spoke in his prophesying concerning Christ, of his being sold, his being wounded in the house of his friends, and the shepherd being smitten, was verified in the prophet himself, and so he became a type of Christ. Probably, being assaulted by his persecutors, he took sanctuary in the court of the priests (and some think he was himself a priest) and so was slain between the porch and the altar.

2. The first fruits of Zechariah's ministry. Before he came to visions and revelations, and delivered his prophetic discourses, he preached that which was plain and practical; for it is best to begin with that: Before he published the promises of mercy, he published calls to repentance, for thus the way of the Lord must be prepared. Law must be first preached, and then gospel.

Now, 1. The prophet here puts them in mind of the controversy God had had with their fathers, *ver. 2.* The Lord has been sore displeased with your fathers, and has laid them under the tokens of his displeasure. You have heard with your ears, and your fathers have told you of it; you have seen with your eyes the woeful remains of it. God's quarrel with you has been of long standing, and therefore it is time for you to think of taking it up. Note, The judgments of God which those that went before us were under should be taken as warnings to us not to tread in their steps, and calls to repentance, that we may cut off the entail of the curse, and get it turned into a blessing.

2. He calls them in God's name to return to him, and make their peace with him, *ver. 3.* God by him saith that to this backsliding people which he had often said by his servants the prophets, Turn ye to me in a way of faith and repentance, duty and obedience, and I will turn to you in a way of favour and mercy, peace and reconciliation. Let the rebels return to their allegiance, and they shall be taken under the protection of the government, and enjoy all the privileges of good subjects. Let them change their way, and God will change his. See *Mal. iii. 7.* But that which is most observable here is, that God is called here the Lord of hosts three times; Thus saith the Lord of hosts: It is he that speaks, and therefore you are bound to regard what he saith. Turn ye to me saith the Lord of hosts, That speaks the authority and obligation of the command, and I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts, That speaks the validity and value of the promise; so that it is no vain repetition. Note, The consideration of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion should both engage and encourage sinners to repent, and turn to him. It is very desirable having the Lord of hosts our friend, and very dreadful having him our enemy.

3. He warns them not to persist in their impenitence as their fathers had done, *ver. 4.* Be ye not as your fathers. Instead of being hardened in their evil courses by the example of their fathers' sins, let them rather be deterred from them by the example of their fathers' punishment. We are apt to be governed very much by precedent, and we are well or ill governed according to the use we make of the precedents before us. The same examples to some are a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death. Some argued, shall we be wiser than our fathers? they never minded the prophets, and why then shall we mind them? they made laws against them, and why should we tolerate them? but they are here taught how they should argue: Our fathers slighted the prophets, and God was sore displeased with them for it, therefore let us the more carefully regard what God saith to us by his prophets. Review what is past, and observe,

1. What was the message that God sent by his servants the prophets to your fathers. The former prophets cried to your fathers, cried aloud, and did not spare, not spare themselves, nor spare your fathers; they cried as men in earnest, as men that would be heard: they spoke not as from themselves, but in the name of the Lord of hosts, and this was the substance of what they said, the burden of every song, the application of every sermon, Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doing; the very same that we now preach to you. Be persuaded to leave your sins, resolve to have no more to do with them. A speedy reformation is the only way to prevent an approaching ruin. Turn ye now from sin to God without delay.

2. How little this message was regarded by your fathers; but they did not hear, they did not heed. They turned a deaf ear to these calls; They would not hearken unto me, saith the Lord. They would not be reclaimed, would not be ruled by the word I sent them; say not then you will do as your fathers did, for they did amiss, see *Jer. xlv. 17.* Note, We must not follow



follow the examples of our dear fathers, unless they were God's dear children, nor any further than they were dutiful and obedient to him.

3. What is become both of your fathers and of the prophets that preached to them? They are all dead and gone: *ver. 5. (1.) Your fathers, where are they?* The whole generation of them is swept away, and their place knows them no more. No'e, When we think of our ancestors, that are gone through the world, and gone out of it before us, we should think *where they are*. Here they were in the towns and countries where we live, passing and repassing in the same streets, dwelling in the same houses, trading in the same shops and exchanges, worshipping God in the same churches. But *where are they?* they are somewhere still, when they died there was not an end of them; they are in eternity, in the world of spirits, the unchangeable world, to which we are hastening apace; *Where are they?* Those of them that lived and died in sin are *in torment*, and we are warned by Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to look to it that we *come not to that place of torment*, Luke xvi. 28, 29. Those of them that lived and died in Christ are *in Paradise*, and if we live and die as they did, we shall be with them shortly, with them eternally. (2.) *The prophets also, did they live for ever?* No, they are gone too. The treasure is put into earthen vessels, the water of life into earthen pitchers, often cracked, and brought home broken at last. Christ is a prophet that *lives for ever*; but other prophets have a period put to their office. Note, Ministers are dying men, and live not for ever in this world. They are to look upon themselves as such, and to preach accordingly, as those that must be silenced shortly, and know not which sermon may be the last; people are to look upon them as such, and to hear accordingly, as those that yet a little while have the *light with them*, that they may walk and work *while they have the light*. O that this weighty consideration had its due weight given it, that we are dying ministers dealing with dying people about the concerns of immortal souls, and an awful eternity, which both they and we are standing upon the brink of! It concerns us to think of the prophets that are *gone*, that were *before us of old*. Jer. xxviii. 8. They that were the glory of men withered and fell, but the word of the Lord endures for ever, 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. The prophets that are *now*, do we *live for ever*? so some read it, no, Haggai and Zechariah will not be long with you; and prophecy itself shall shortly cease. In another world, both we and our prophets shall *live for ever*, and to prepare for that world, ought to be our great care and business in this.

4. What the effects of the word were which God spoke to them by his prophets. *ver. 6.* The preachers died, and the hearers died, but the word of God did not; that took effect, and not one iota or tittle of it fell to the ground. As the rain and snow from heaven it shall not return void, Isa. lv. 11. He appeals to themselves; they knew very well, (1.) That the judgments God had threatened were executed upon their fathers, and they were made to feel what they would not believe and fear. *My statutes which I commanded my servants the prophets*, the precepts, with the penalties annexed, which I charged them with the delivery of, *did they not take hold of your fathers*. Though God's prophets could not fasten convictions upon them, the calamities threatened overtook them, and they could not escape them, or get out of the reach of them. God's words took hold of them as the bailiff arrests the debtor, and takes him in execution for contempt. Note, The unbelief of man cannot make the threatenings of God's word of none effect, but sooner or later they will take place, if the prescribed course be not taken to prevent the execution of them. God's anger will certainly take hold of those that will not be taken hold of by his authority; for when he judgeth, he will overcome. (2.) That they themselves could not but own the accomplishment of the word of God in the judgments of God that were upon them, and that therein he was righteous, and had done them no wrong: *They returned and said* (they changed their mind, and when it was too late to prevent the ruin of their nation they acknowledged) *like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and doings*, to reckon with us for them, *so hath he dealt with us*, and we must acknowledge both his truth and his justice; must blame ourselves only, and have no blame to lay to him. *Sero sapient Phryges*. This after wit, as it is a proof of the truth of God, so it is a proof of the folly of men, that will look no farther than they can see: They would never be persuaded to say in time, *God will be as good as his word*, for he is faithful, he will deal with us according to our deserts, for he is righteous. But now they see both plain enough, when the sentence is executed; now he that runs may read and publish the exact agreement that appears between the present providences and the former predictions which then were slighted, between the present punishments and the former sins which then were persisted in. Now they cannot but say, *The Lord is righteous*, Dan. ix. 14, 12, 13.

7. ¶ Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 8. I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom: and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. 9. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. 10. And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. 11. And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. 12. ¶ Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? 13. And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. 14. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. 15. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. 16. Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am

returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. 17. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; my cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

We now come to visions and revelations of the Lord; for in that way God chose to speak by Zechariah, to awaken the people's attention, and to engage their humble reverence of the word, and their humble enquiries into it, and to fix it the more in their minds and memories. Most of the following visions seemed designed for the comfort of the Jews, now newly returned out of captivity, and their encouragement to go on with the building of the temple.

The scope of this vision (which is as an introduction to the rest) is to assure the Jews of the care God took of them, and the eye of his providence that was upon them for good, now in their present state, when they seemed to be deserted, and their case deplorable. The vision is dated, *ver. 7.* the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, three months after he preached that sermon, *ver. 1.* in which he called them to repentance from the consideration of God's judgments. Finding that that sermon had a good effect, and they returned to God in a way of duty, the assurances he had given them are confirmed, that God would return to them in a way of mercy. Now observe here,

1. *What the prophet saw, and the explication of that.*

1. He saw a grove of myrtle trees; a dark shady grove, down in a bottom, hid by the adjacent hills, so that you were not aware of it, till you were just upon it. This represented the low, dark, solitary, melancholy condition of the Jewish church at this time. They were over-topped by all their neighbours, buried in obscurity; what friends they had were hidden, and there appeared no way of relief and succour for them. Note, The church has been always visible, but sometimes hid, as the woman in the wilderness, Rev. xii. 6.

2. He saw a man mounted upon a red horse, standing in the midst of this shady myrtle-grove. This man is no other than the man Christ Jesus; the same that appeared to Joshua with his sword drawn in his hand, as captain of the host of the Lord, Josh. v. 13, 14, and to St. John, with his bow and his crown, Rev. vi. 2. Though the church was in a low condition, yet Christ was present in the midst of it; was it hid by the hills; he was much more hid in the myrtle-grove, yet hid as an ambush, ready to appear for the seasonable relief of his people, to their happy surprise. Compare Isa. xlv. 15. *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself*, and yet Israel's God and Saviour at the same time, their holy One in the midst of them. He was riding, as a man of war; as a man in haste; riding on the heavens for the help of his people, Deut. xxxiii. 26. He rode on a red horse; either naturally so, or dyed red with the blood of war, as this same victorious prince appeared red in his apparel, Isa. lxiii. 1, 2. Red is a fiery colour, noting that he is jealous for Jerusalem, *ver. 14.* and very angry at her enemies. Christ under the law appeared on a red horse, noting the terror of that dispensation, and that he had yet his conflict before him, when he was to resist unto blood. But under the gospel he appears on a white horse, Rev. vi. 2. and again, chap. xix. 11. noting that he has now gained the victory, and rides in triumph; and hangs out the white, not the bloody flag.

3. He saw a troop of horse attending him, ready to receive and obey his orders: Behind him there were some red horses, and some speckled, and some white; angels attending the Lord Jesus, ready to be employed by him for the service of his church, some in acts of judgment, others of mercy, others in mixed events. Note, The King of the church has angels at command, not only to do him honour, but to minister for the good of those that are his.

4. He enquired into the signification of this vision. He had an angel talking with him as his instructor, besides those he saw in the vision; so had Ezekiel, chap. xl. 3. and Daniel, chap. viii. 16. Zechariah asked him, *ver. 9. O my Lord what are these?* And it should seem, this angel that talked with him was Christ himself: the man on the red horse; whom the rest were attendants on; to him immediately Zechariah addresseth himself: would we be acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, we must make our application, not to angels, they are themselves learners, but to Christ himself who is alone able to take the book, and open the seals, Rev. v. 7. The prophet's question implies an humble acknowledgment of his own ignorance, and an earnest desire to be informed; O let me know what these are: this he desired, not for the satisfying of his curiosity, but that he might be furnished with something proper for the comfort and encouragement of the people of God in their present distress.

5. He received from the angel that talked with him, *ver. 9.* and from the man that stood among the myrtle-trees, *ver. 10.* the interpretation of this vision. Note, Jesus Christ is ready to instruct those that are humbly desirous to be taught the things of God. He presently said, *I will shew thee what these be*. What knowledge we have or may have concerning the world of spirits, we are indebted to Christ for. The account given him was, *These are they whom the Lord hath sent*, they are his messengers, his envoys, appointed (as his eyes are said to do, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.) to walk, to run, to fly swiftly through the earth, to observe what is done in it, and to execute the divine commands. God needs them not, but he is pleased to employ them, and we need the comfort arising from the doctrine of their administration.

2. *What the prophet heard, and what instructions were thereby given him.*

Faith comes by hearing, and generally in visions there was something said. 1. He heard the report or representation which the angels made to Christ of the present state of the world, *ver. 11.* They had been out abroad as flying posts, (being hastened by the King of kings' commandment, Esther iii. 15.) and being returned they gave this account to the angel that stood among the myrtle-trees, (for to the Lord Jesus angels themselves are accountable) *we have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest*. We are taught to pray that the will of God may be done by men on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven; and here we see what need we have to pray so, for it is far from being so. For, (1.) We find the world of angels here very busy. Those that are employed in the court above, rest not day nor night from praising God, which is their business there; and those that are employed in the camp below, are never idle, nor lose time, they are still ascending and descending upon the Son of man, John i. 51. as on Jacob's ladder, Gen. xxviii. 12. they are still walking to and fro through the earth. This active, thus industrious Satan owns himself to be to do mischief, Job i. 7. It is well for us that good angels bestir themselves as much to do good, and that here in this earth we have guardians going about continually seeking to do us a kindness, as we have adversaries that as roaring lions go about continually seeking to devour us. Though holy angels in this earth meet with a great deal that is disagreeable, yet while they are going on God's errands, they stick not to walk to and fro through it: Their own



own habitation, which those that fell liked not, they will like the better when they return. (2.) We find the world of mankind here very careless; *all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest*, while all the church is made uneasy, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. Those that are strangers to the church are *secure*, those that are enemies to it are *successful*. The Chaldeans and Persians dwell at ease, while the poor Jews are continually alarmed; as when the king and his men sat down to drink but the city Shushan was perplexed. The children of men are merry and jovial, but none grieved for the affliction of God's children. Note, It is sad to think what a deep sleep the world is cast into! what a spirit of slumber hath seized the generality of mankind, that are under God's wrath and Satan's power, and yet secure and unconcerned, they sit still, and are at rest! Luke xvii. 26, &c.

2. He heard Christ's intercession with the Father for his afflicted church, ver. 12. The angels related the posture of affairs in this lower world, but we read not of any prayers they made for the redress of the grievances they had made a remonstrance of; no, it is the Angel among the myrtle-trees that is the great intercessor: upon the report of the angels, he immediately turned heavenward, and said, *Lord, wilt thou not have mercy on thy church?* (1.) The thing he intercedes for is *mercy*, as Psal. lxxxv. 7. *Show us thy mercy, O Lord*. Note, God's mercy is all in all to the church's comfort; and all his mercy must be hoped for through Christ's mediation. (2.) The thing he complains of is the delay of his mercy; *how long wilt thou not have mercy!* He knows that mercies through him shall be built up for ever. Psal. lxxxix. 2. but thinks it long that the building is deferred. (3.) The objects of compassion recommended to the divine mercies are Jerusalem, the holy city, and other the cities of Judah, that were now in ruins; for God had had indignation against them, now threescore and ten years. He mentions seventy years, because that was the time fixed in the divine counsels for the continuance of the captivity; so long the indignation lasted, and though now for a little space grace had been shewed them from the Lord their God to give them some reviving, Ezra ix. 8. yet the scars of those seventy years captivity still remained so deep, so painful, that that is the melancholy string they still harp upon, the divine indignation during those seventy years. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that whereas the seventy years of the captivity were reckoned from Jehoiakim's fourth year, and ended in the first of Cyrus; these seventy years are to be computed from the eleventh of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem and the temple were burnt, about nineteen years after the first captivity, and which ended in this second year of Darius Hystaspes, about seventeen years after Cyrus's proclamation; as that seventy years mentioned, chap. vii. 5. was about nineteen years after: the captivity went off as it came on gradually: Lord, we are still under the burden of the seventy years wrath, and wilt thou be angry with us for ever!

3. He heard a gracious reply given to this intercession of Christ's for his church; for it is a prevailing intercession, always acceptable, and him the father heareth always. Ver. 13. *The Lord answered the angel*, this angel of the covenant, with good words, and comfortable words, with promises of mercy and deliverance, and the perfecting of what he had begun in favour to them. These were comfortable words to Christ, who is grieved in the grievances of his church, and comfortable to all that mourn with Zion. God often answers prayer with good words, when he doth not presently appear in great works, and those good words are real answers to prayer; men's good words will not feed the body, Jam. ii. 16. but God's good words will feed the faith, for saying and doing with him are not two things, though they are with us.

4. He heard that reply which was given to the angel repeated to himself, with a commission to publish it to the children of his people for their comfort. *The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him he signified to his servant John*, and by him to the churches, Rev. i. 1—1. Thus all the good words, and comfortable words of the gospel we receive from Jesus Christ, as he received them from the Father, in answer to the prayer of his blood, and his ministers are appointed to preach them to all the world. Now God would speak comfortably to Jerusalem: *Zechariah is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. The voice said, Cry. Cry then; the prophets must now cry as loud, to shew God's people their comforts*, as ever they did formerly to shew them their transgressions, Isa. xl. 2, 3—6. And if he ask what he shall cry? He is here instructed.

1. He must proclaim the wrath God has in store for the enemies of Jerusalem. He is *jealous for Zion with great jealousy*, ver. 14. i. e. He takes himself to be highly affronted by the injuries and indignities that are done to his church, as he had been formerly by the iniquities found in his church. *The earth sat still, and was at rest*, ver. 11. not relenting at all or shewing the least remorse for all the mischief they had done to Jerusalem; as Joseph's brethren, who when they had sold him, sat down to eat bread; and this God took very ill, ver. 15. *I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease*, and have no concern for the afflicted church. Much more will he be displeased with those that are at ease in Zion, Amos. vi. 1. with Zion's own sons that sympathise not with her in her sorrows. But this was not all; they were not only concerned for her, but they were concerned against her. *I was but a little displeased with my people*, and designed to correct them moderately; but those that were employed as instruments of the correction, cast off all pity; and with the greatest rage and malice helped forward the affliction, and added to it, persecuting those whom God had smitten, Psal. lxxix. 26. and insulting over those whom he had troubled. See Isa. xlvii. 6—x. 5. Ezek. xxv. 12—15. Note, God is displeased with those that help forward the affliction even of such as suffer justly; for true humanity in such a case is good divinity.

2. He must proclaim the mercy God has in store for Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, ver. 16. He must cry, *Thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies*: I was going away in wrath, but I am now returning in love. Cry yet to the same purpose, ver. 17. There must now be line upon line for consolation, as formerly there had been for conviction. The Lord, even the Lord of hosts, assures them, (1.) That the temple shall be built, that is now but in the building: this good work they are now about, though it meet with much discouragement, shall be perfected, and they shall have the tokens of God's presence, and opportunities of conversing with him, and worshipping him as formerly. Note, It is good news indeed to any place, to hear that God will build his house in it. (2.) That Jerusalem shall again be built as a city compact together, which hath formerly been its glory, Psal. cxxii. 3. *A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem*, in order to the rebuilding of it with great exactness and uniformity. (3.) That the nation shall again become populous and rich, though now diminished and impoverished; not only Jerusalem, but other cities that are reduced and lie in a little compass shall yet spread abroad, or be diffused; their suburbs shall extend far, and colonies shall be transplanted from them; and this through prosperity: they shall be so numerous, and so wealthy, that there shall not be room for them; they shall complain the place is too strait, Isa. xlix. 20. As they had been scattered and spread abroad through their calamities, so they should now be through their prosperity, *Let thy fountains be dispersed*, Prov. v. 16. The cities that should thus increase God calls his cities; they are blessed by him, and they are

fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land. (4.) That all their present sorrows should not only be balanced, but for ever silenced by divine consolations; *the Lord shall yet comfort Zion*. Yet at length, though her griefs and grievances may continue long, God has comforts in reserve for Zion; and all her mourners. (5.) That all this will be the fruit of God's preventing distinguishing favour; he shall yet choose Jerusalem, shall renew his choice, renew his covenant, shall make it appear he has chosen Jerusalem. As he first built them up into a people, when he brought them out of Egypt, so he will now rebuild them when he brings them out of Babylon; not for any worthiness of theirs, but in pursuance of his own choice, Deut. vii. 7, 8. Jerusalem is the city he has chosen, and he will not cast it off.

18. ¶ Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. 19. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. 20. And the LORD shewed me four carpenters. 21. Then said I, what come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head; but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

It is the comfort and triumph of the church, Isa. lix. 19. that when the enemy shall come in like a flood, with mighty force and fury, then the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him: Now in this vision, (the second that this prophet had) we have an illustration of that; God's Spirit making a stand and making head against the formidable power of the church's adversaries.

1. We have here the enemies of the church, bold and daring, and threatening to be its death, to cut off the name of Israel; such the people of God had lately been insulted by. I looked, and behold, four horns, ver. 18. which are explained, ver. 19. They are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem; i. e. the Jews both in the country and in the city, because they were the Israel of God. They have tossed them, so some read it; as furious bulls with their horns toss that which they are enraged at. They have scattered them, so that no man did lift up his head, ver. 21. No man durst show his face for fear of them, much less give them any opposition, or make head against them. They are horns, noting their dignity and dominion, horns exalted; and their strength and power and violence. They are four horns, for the Jews are surrounded with them on every side: when they avoid one horn that pusheth at them, they run upon another. The men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many of Israel that joined themselves to them, set about the building of the temple, but the enemies of that work from all sides pushed at them, and drove them from it. Rehun and Shimshai, and other the Samaritans that opposed the building of the temple were these horns, Ezra iv. 7. So were Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Ammonites and Arabians that opposed the building of the wall, Neh. iv. 7. Note, The church's enemies have horns, and use them to the hindrance of every good work. The great enemy of the New Testament church hath seven heads and ten horns, Rev. xvii. 3. that they who endeavour to do the church any service must expect to be pushed at.

2. We have here the friends of the church active and prevailing. The prophet did himself lift up his eyes, and see the four horns, and saw them so formidable that he began to despair of the safety of every good man, and the success of every good work; but the Lord then shewed him four carpenters, or smiths that were empowered to cut off these horns, ver. 20, 21. With an eye of sense we see the power of the enemies of the church; look which way we will the world shews us that; but it is with an eye of faith that we see it safe notwithstanding; It is the Lord that shews us that, as he opened the eyes of the prophet's servant to see the angelic guards round about his master, 2 Kings, vi. 17. Observe those that were to fray or break the horns of the Gentiles, and to cast them out, were, (1.) Carpenters or smiths, (for they are supposed by some to have been horns of iron) men that had skill and ability to do it; whose proper business it was, and who understood their business, and had tools at hand to do it with. Note, God calls those to serve the interests of his church, whom he either finds or makes fit for it. If there be horns against the church which speak the force and fury of beasts, there are carpenters for the church which speak the wisdom and forecast of men by which they find ways to master the strongest beasts, for every kind of beasts is tamed, and has been tamed of mankind, Jam. iii. 7. (2.) They were four carpenters: As many horns, so many hands to saw them off. Note, Which way soever the church is threatened with mischief, and opposition given to its interest, God can find out ways and means to check the force, to restrain the wrath, and make it turn to his praise. Some by these four carpenters understand Zerubbabel and Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, that carried on the work of God in despite of the opposition given to it. Those horned beasts broke into God's vineyard to tread it down, but the good magistrates and the good ministers whom God raised up, though they had not power to cut off the horns of the wicked as David did, Psal. lxxv. 5—10. yet they frightened them, and cast them out.

Note, When God has work to do he will raise up some to do it, and others to defend it, and protect those that are employed in the doing of it.

## C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Another vision which the prophet saw, not for his own entertainment, but for his satisfaction, and the edification of those to whom he was sent, ver. 1, 2. (2.) A sermon upon it in the rest of the chapter; (1.) By way of explication of the vision, shewing it to be a prediction of the replenishing of Jerusalem, and of its safety and honour, ver. 3—5. (2.) By way of application. Here is, (1.) A use of exhortation to the Jews that were yet in Babylon, pressing them to hasten their return to their own land, ver. 6—9. (2.) A use of consolation to those that were returned, in reference to the many difficulties they had to struggle with, ver. 10, 11. (3.) A use of caution to all not to prescribe to God, or limit him, but patiently to wait for him, ver. 13.

1. I LIFTED up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. 2. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. 3. And behold,



hold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him. 4. And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein. 5. For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

This prophet was ordered in God's name to assure the people, chap. i. 16. that a line should be stretched forth upon Jerusalem: Now here we have that promise illustrated and confirmed that the prophet might deliver that part of his message to the people with the more clearness and assurance.

1. He sees in a vision a man going to measure Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. *He lifted up his eyes again, and behold.* God had shewed him that which was very encouraging to him, chap. i. 20. and therefore now he *lifted up his eyes again and looked.* Note, The comfortable sights which by faith we have had of God's goodness made to pass before us should engage us to *lift up our eyes again*, and to search further into the discoveries made us of the divine grace; for there is still more to be seen. In the close of the foregoing chapter he had seen Jerusalem's enemies baffled and broken, so that now he begins to hope she shall not be ruined. But that is not enough to make her happy, and therefore that is not all that is promised: Here is more *carpenter's work* to be done. When David had resolved to *cut off the horns of the wicked*, he engaged likewise that the *horns of the righteous* should be *exalted*, Psal. xv. 10. And so doth the *Son of David* here; for he is the man, even the man Christ Jesus, whom the prophet sees *with a measuring line in his hand*; for he is the master-builder of his church, Heb. iii. 3. and he builds exactly by line and level. Zechariah took the boldness to ask him *whither he was going?* And what he designed to do with that measuring-line? And he readily told him he was going to *measure Jerusalem*; to take a particular account of the dimensions of it each way; that it might be computed what was necessary for the making a wall about it; and that it might appear by comparing its dimensions with the vast numbers that should inhabit it, what additions were necessary to be made for the receiving and containing of them; when multitudes flock to Jerusalem (Isa. lx. 4.) it is time for her to *enlarge the place of her tent*, (Isa. liv. 2.) Note, God takes notice of the extent of his church, and will take care that when ever so many guests are brought in to the wedding-supper, yet still there shall be room, Luke xiv. 22. In the *New Jerusalem*, my Father's house above, there are many mansions.

2. He is informed that this vision means well to Jerusalem; that the measuring-line he saw was not a *line of confusion*, as that Isa. xxxiv. 11. not a line to mete out for destruction, as when God purposed to *destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion*, he stretched out a line, Lam. ii. 8. But it is as when he divided the inheritance by line, Psal. lxxviii. 55. The angel that talked with the prophet went forth as he designed to *measure Jerusalem*, but another angel went out to meet him, to desire that he would first explain this vision to the prophet, that it might not occasion him any uneasy speculations: *Run, and speak to this young man*, (for it seems the prophet entered upon his prophecy when he was young, yet no man ought to despise his youth, when God thus highly honoured it.) He is a *young man*, not experienced, and may be ready to *fear the worst*, therefore bid him *hope the best*; tell him that Jerusalem shall be both *safe* and *great*.

1. As *safe* and *great* as numbers of men can make it; ver. 4. *Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls*, i. e. the inhabitants of it shall *increase and multiply*, and *replenish it* to admiration, so as to extend itself far beyond the present dimensions which now there is an account taken of. The walls of a city as they defend it, so they *straiten and confine* it, and keep its inhabitants from multiplying beyond such a pitch; but Jerusalem, even when it is called to keep off the enemy, yet shall be inhabited *as towns without walls*; the city shall be in a manner lost in the suburbs, as London is, where the out parishes are more populous than those within the walls; so shall it be with Jerusalem; it shall be extended as freely as if it had no walls at all, and yet shall be as safe as if it had the strongest walls, such a *multitude of men* (which are the best walls of a city) *shall there be therein*; and of *cattle too*, to be not only food, but wealth too for those men. Note, The increase of the numbers of a people is a great blessing, is a fruit of God's blessing on them, and an earnest of further blessings, Psal. cxli. 58. *They are multiplied, for he blesseth them.*

2. As *safe* and *great* as the *presence of God* can make it, ver. 5. (1.) It shall be safe, for God himself will be a *wall of fire round about it*; Jerusalem had no walls about it at this time, but lay naked and exposed; formerly when it had walls the enemies not only broke through them but broke them down, but now *God will be unto her a wall of fire*. Some think it alludes to shepherds that made fires about their flocks, or travellers that made fires about their tents in desert places to frighten wild beasts from them. God will not only *make a hedge* about them as he did about Job, chap. i. 10. not only make walls and bulwarks about them, *I a. xxvi. 1.* Those may be battered down; not only be as the mountains round about them, *Psal. cxxv. 2.* (mountains may be got over) but he will be a *wall of fire* round them, which can neither be broken through, nor scaled, nor undermined, nor the foundation of it sapped, nor can it be attempted or approached without danger to the assailants. God will not only make a wall of fire about her, but he will himself be such a wall, for *our God is a consuming fire* to his and his church's enemies. He is a *wall of fire*, not on one side only, but *round about on every side*. (2.) It shall be *great*, for God himself will be the *glory in the midst of it*. His temple, his altar shall be set up and attended there, and his institutions observed, and there then shall the tokens of his special presence and favour be, which will be the *glory in the midst of them*, will make them truly admirable in the eyes of all about them. God will have honour from them, and put honour upon them. Note, Those that have God for their God, have him for their glory: that have him in the midst of them, have glory in the midst of them, and thence the church is said to be *all glorious within*. And those persons and places that have God to be the *glory in the midst of them*, have him for a *wall of fire round about them*, for upon all that glory there is, and shall be a defence, Isa. iv. 5. Now all this was fulfilled in part, in that Jerusalem in process of time became a very flourishing city, and made a very great figure in those parts of the world, much beyond what could have been expected, considering how low it was brought, and how long it was ere it recovered herself. But it was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, which is extended far, as towns without walls, by the admission of the Gentiles into it; and which hath God, the Son of God, for its prince and protector.

6. ¶ *Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north*, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the

LORD. 7. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. 8. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. 9. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.

One would have thought Cyrus's proclamation, which gave liberty to the captive Jews to return to their own land, should have sufficed to bring them all back, and that as when Pharaoh gave them leave to quit Egypt and their house of bondage there, they should not have left a hoof behind; but it seems it had not that effect; There were about forty thousand whose spirits God stirred up to go, and they went: but many, perhaps the greater part, staid behind; the land of their captivity was to most of them the land of their nativity, they had taken root there, had *gained a settlement*, and many of them a very comfortable one; some perhaps had got estates and preferments there, and they did not think they could mend themselves by returning to their own land: *Patria est ubicunque bene est*. They had no great affection to their own land, and apprehended the difficulties in their way to it insuperable. This proceeded from an *ill cause*, a distrust of the power and promise of God, a love of ease and worldly wealth, and an indifference to the religion of their country, and to the God of Israel himself: and it had an *ill effect*, for it was an implicit censure of those as foolish and rash, and given to change that did return, and a weakening of their hands in the work of God; such as these could not sing *Psal. cxxxvii.* in their captivity, for they had *forgot thee, O Jerusalem*, and were so far from preferring thee before their chief joy, that they preferred any joy before thee. Here is therefore another proclamation issued out by the God of Israel, strictly charging and commanding all his free-born subjects wherever they were dispersed, speedily to return into their own land, and render themselves at their respective posts there: They are loudly summoned, ver. 6. *Ho, ho, come forth and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD.* This fully follows upon the promise of the rebuilding and enlarging of Jerusalem: If God will build it for them and their comfort, they must come and inhabit it for him and his glory, and not continue sneaking in Babylon. Note, The promises and privileges with which God's people are blessed, should engage us whatever it cost us to join ourselves to them, and *cast in our lot among them*. When Zion is enlarged to make room for all God's Israel, it is the greatest madness imaginable for any of them to stay in Babylon. The captivity of a sinful state is by no means to be continued in, though a man be never so easy upon temporal accounts, no, *come forth, and flee* with all speed, and lose no time? *Escape for thy life, look not behind thee.*

To induce them to hasten their return, let them consider,

1. They are now *dispersed*, and were concerned to *incorporate* themselves for their mutual common defence, ver. 6. *I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven*; sent some into one corner of the world, and some into another, and this has been your condition a long time, and therefore you should now think of coming together again to help one another. God owns that his scattering them was in wrath, and therefore they must take this invitation as a token of God's being willing to be reconciled to them again; so that they kicked at his kindness in refusing to accept the call.

2. They are now *in bondage*, and were concerned to *assert* their own liberty, and therefore *deliver thyself, O Zion*, flee from the oppressor, and make the best of thy way. Let us see some such bold efforts and struggles to help thyself as become the generous gracious seed of Abraham, ver. 7. Note, When Christ has proclaimed that deliverance to the captives which he has himself wrought out, it then concerns each of us to *deliver ourselves, to loose ourselves from the bonds of our necks*, Isa. lii. 2. and since we are under grace to resolve that *sin shall not have dominion over us*, Zion herself is here said to *dwell with the daughter of Babylon*, because many of the *precious sons of Zion* dwell there; and where the people of God are, there the church of God is, for it is not tied to places. Now it is not fit that Zion should *dwell with the daughter of Babylon*, what communion can light have with darkness? Zion will be in danger of partaking with the *daughter of Babylon*, both in her sins, and in her plagues, and therefore *come out of her, my people*, Rev. xviii. 4. *Deliver thyself, O Zion*, by a speedy return to thy own land, and do not *destroy thyself* by continuing in that polluted devoted land. Those that would be found among the generation of God's children, must *save themselves from the untoward generation* of this world; it was St. Peter's charge to his new converts, *Acts ii. 40.*

3. They have seemed to be *forsaken and forgotten* of God, but God will now make it to appear that he *espouseth* their cause, and will *plead* it with jealousy, ver. 8, 9. It was a discouragement to those who remained in Babylon to hear of the difficulties and oppositions which their brethren met with that were returned, by which they were still in danger of being crushed and overpowered. And we had as good sit still (think they) as rise up and fall. In answer to this objection, the angel that talked with the prophet, that is, Jesus Christ, tells him what he had commission to do for their protection, and the perfecting of their salvation, and herein has an eye to the great redemption which in the fulness of time he was to be the author of. Christ, who is Jehovah, and the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, in both which he has a sovereign power, *saith He, i. e. the Father hath sent me*. Note, What Jesus Christ hath done, and doth for his church against his enemies, he was sent and commissioned by the Father to do. With great satisfaction he often speaks of the *Father that sent him*.

1. He is sent *after the glory*. After the glorious beginning of their deliverance he is sent to perfect it, for he is the finisher of that work which he is the author of. Christ is sent in the first place to the nations and people of the Jews, to whom *pertaineth the glory*, Rom. ix. 4. And he was himself the *glory of his people Israel*. But *after the glory*, after the care of them, he is sent to the nations to be a *light to lighten the Gentiles*, by the power of his gospel to captivate them and bring them, and every high thought among them into obedience to himself.

2. He is sent to the nations that spoiled them, to take vengeance on them for the wrongs done to Zion, when the year of his redeemed comes, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion, Isa. xxxiv. 8. He is sent to *shake his hands upon them*, to lift up his mighty hand against them, and to lay upon them his heavy hand, to *bruise them with a rod of iron*, and *dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*, Psal. ii. 9. Some think it intimates, how easily God can subdue and humble them with the turn of his hand; it is but *shaking his hand* over them and the work is done. *They shall be a spoil to their servants*, shall be enslaved to those whom they had enslaved; and be plundered by those they had plundered. In Esther's time this was fulfilled when the Jews had rule over them that hated them, Esth. ix. 1. And often in the time of the Maccabees: And the promise is further fulfilled in Christ's victory



victory over our spiritual enemies, his spoiling *principalities and powers* and *making a shew of them openly*, Col. ii. 15. And it is still in force to the gospel church: Christ will reckon with all that are enemies to it, and sooner or later will make them his *footstool*, Psal. cx. 1. Rev. iii. 9.

3. What he will do for his church shall be an evident proof of God's tender care of it, and affection to it. *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.* This is a high expression of God's love to his church. By his resentment of the injuries done to her it appears how dear she is to him, how he interest himself in all her interests, and takes what is done against her not only as done against himself, but as done against the very *apple of his eye*, the tenderest part, which nature has made very fine, has put a double guard upon, and taught us to be in a special manner careful of, and which the *least touch* is a great offence to. This encourageth the people of God to pray with David, Psal. xvii. 8. *Keep me as the apple of thine eye*; and engageth them to do as Solomon directs, Prov. vii. 2. *to keep his law as the apple of their eye.* Some understand it thus: *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his own eye*; whoever do you any injury, will prove in the issue to have done the greatest injury to themselves.

4. It shall be an evident proof of Christ's mission; *Ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me* to be the protector of his church; that the promises made to the church are yea and amen in him. Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies proves that the Father sent him, and was with him.

10. ¶ Sing and rejoice O daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. 11. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee. 12. And the LORD shall inherit Judah, his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. 13. Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

Here is, 1. Joy proclaimed to the church of God; to the daughter of Zion that had separated herself from the daughter of Babylon. The Jews that were returned were in great distress and danger, their enemies in the neighbourhood were spiteful against them, their friends that remained in Babylon were cool towards them, shy of them, and declined coming to their assistance, and yet they are bid to sing and to rejoice even in tribulation. Note, Those that have recovered their purity, and integrity, and spiritual liberty, though they have not yet recovered their outward prosperity, have reason to sing and rejoice; to give glory to God and take comfort to themselves.

1. God will have a people among them: If their brethren in Babylon will not come to them those of other nations shall, and shall replenish Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, that are now at a distance from him, and strangers to him. The Jewish nation after the captivity, multiplied very much by the accession of proselytes to it, that were naturalized and were entitled to all the privileges of native Israelites, and perhaps they were equal in number. And therefore Paul mentions it as an honour to him which many Jews had not, that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, Phil. iii. 5. And this was an earnest of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the Christian church; and in that this and other like promises were to have their full accomplishment. It was therefore strange that that should be so great an offence to the Jews as we find it was in the apostles times, which was promised to them as a blessing in the prophets times, that many nations should be joined to the Lord. And as there had been one law, so should there be one gospel for the stranger and for those born in the land; whatever nation they come from, when they join themselves to the Lord they shall be my people, as dear to God as ever Israel had been. Note, God will own those for his people that with purpose of heart join themselves to him; and when many do so, we ought to look upon them not with a jealous eye, but with a joyful one. Angels rejoice, and therefore so should the daughter of Zion when many nations are joined to the Lord.

2. They shall have his presence among them. Sing and rejoice, for I come: those to whom God comes have reason to rejoice, for he will be to them their chief joy. God will come, not to make them a visit only, but to reside with them, and preside over them; I will dwell in the midst of thee, ver. 10. and it is repeated, ver. 11. because it was to have a double accomplishment: (1.) In the dedication of the temple, in their regular observing all God's institutions there, and God's owning them therein. Those have God dwelling in the midst of them, that have his ordinances administered in their purity, and a divine power going along with them; with these tokens of God's presence the Jewish church was blessed after this as much as ever. (2.) In the incarnation of Christ. He that here promiseth to dwell among them is that Lord whom the Lord of hosts hath sent, ver. 11. and therefore must be the Lord Jesus, who came and dwelt in the midst of the Jewish nation, the eternal Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This was the great honour reserved for that nation in its last days; the promise of it effectually secured their continuance till it was accomplished. They could not be destroyed while that blessing was in them; and the prospect of it according to the promise, was the great support and comfort to them who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. It is promised that when Christ comes and dwells among them, they shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent him; all that were Israelites were indeed made to know it; sufficient proofs were given of it by the miracles Christ wrought, so that they might have known it, and yet there were those that perished in ignorance and unbelief; that would not know it; for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

3. They shall have all their ancient dignities and privileges restored to them again, ver. 12. (1.) Canaan shall be a holy land again; not polluted by sin as it had been formerly, not profaned by the enemies as it had been of late; it shall be an inclosure again, and not laid in common. (2.) Judah shall be in this holy land, shall inhabit it, and enjoy the comfort of it, and no longer be lost and scattered in Babylon. (3.) Judah shall be God's portion which he will delight in, which shall be dear to him, by which he will be served, and in which he will be glorified. The Lord's portion is his people. (4.) God will inherit Judah again as his portion; will claim his interest and recover his possession out of the hands of those that had invaded his right. He will protect his people, and govern them as a man doth his inheritance, and will be at home among them. (5.) He will choose Jerusalem again as he had chosen it formerly to put his name there, will renew and confirm the choice, and continue it a chosen place, till it must resign its honours to the Jerusalem that is from above. Though the election seemed to be set aside for a while, yet it shall obtain.

2. Here is silence proclaimed to all the world beside, ver. 13. The daughter of Zion must sing but all flesh must be silent. Observe here (1.) A

very awful description of God's appearances for the relief of his people. He is raised up out of his holy habitation; as a man out of sleep, Psal. xlv. 23—lxxviii. 65. or as a man entering with resolution upon a business that he will go through with. Heaven is his holy habitation above, thence we must expect him to appear, Isa. lxiv. 1. His temple is so in the lower world, thence from between the cherubim he will shine forth, Psal. lxxx. 1. He is about to do something unusual, unexpected, and very surprising, and to plead his people's cause, which had long seemed neglected. (2.) A seasonable caution and direction at such a time. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord; before Christ and his grace, let not flesh object against the methods he takes before God and his providence, the enemies of the church shall be silenced, all iniquity shall stop her mouth; the friends of the church must be silent. Leave it to God to take his own way, and neither prescribe to him what he should, nor quarrel with him whatever he doth. Be still and know that he is God, Stand still and see his salvation. See Hab. ii. 20. Zeph. i. 7. Silently acquiesce in his holy will, and patiently wait the issue, as those that are assured when God is raised up out of his holy habitation, he will not retreat or sit down again, till he has accomplished his whole work.

## C H A P. III.

The vision in the foregoing chapter gave assurances of the re-establishing of the civil interests of the Jewish nation, the promises of which terminated in Christ. Now the vision in this chapter concerns their church-state, and their ecclesiastical interest, and assures them that they shall be put in a good posture again; and the promises of this also have an eye to Christ, who is not only our prince but the high priest of our profession, of whom Joshua was a type. Here is, 1. A vision relating to Joshua, as the representative of the church in his time, representing the disadvantages he laboured under, and the people in him, with the redress of the grievances of both. (1.) He is accused by Satan, but is brought off by Christ, ver. 1, 2. (2.) He appears in filthy garments, but had them changed, ver. 3, 4, 5. (3.) He is assured of being established in his office if he carry himself well, ver. 6, 7. 2. A sermon relating to Christ, who is here called the Branch, who should be endured with all persecutions for his undertaking, should be carried triumphantly through it, and by whom we should have pardon and peace, ver. 8—10.

1. AND he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2. And the LORD said to Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan, even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? 3. Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. 4. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. 5. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head: so they set a fair mitre upon his head: and clothed him with garments: and the angel of the LORD stood by. 6. And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, 7. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.

There was a Joshua that was a principal agent in the first settling of Israel in Canaan: here is another of the same name very active in their second settlement there after the captivity; Jesus is the same name, and it signifies Saviour: and they were both figures of him that was to come, our chief captain, and our chief priest. The angel that talked with Zechariah shewed him Joshua the high priest; it is likely the prophet saw him frequently, and spoke to him, and there was a great intimacy between them; but in his common views he only saw how he appeared before men; if he must know how he stands before the Lord, it must be shewed him in vision; and so it is shewed him. And so men are really as they are with God, not as they appear in the eye of the world. He stood before the angel of the Lord, i. e. before Christ, the Lord of the angels, to whom even the high priests themselves of Aaron's order were accountable. He stood before the angel of the Lord to execute his office, to minister to God under the inspection of the angels. He stood to consult the oracle on the behalf of Israel, whom as high priest he was agent for.

Guilt and corruption are our two great discouragements when we stand before God. By the guilt of the sins committed by us, we are become obnoxious to the justice of God; by the power of the sin that dwelleth in us, we are become odious to the holiness of God. All God's Israel are in danger upon these two accounts: Joshua were so here, for the law made men priests that had infirmity, Heb. vii. 28. And as to both we have relief from Jesus Christ who is made of God to us both righteousness and sanctification.

1. Joshua is accused as a criminal, but is justified. (1.) A violent opposition is made to him. Satan stands at his right to resist him; to be a Satan to him, a law-advocacy. He stands at his right hand, as the prosecutor or witness at the right hand of the prisoner. Note, The devil is the accuser of the brethren, that accuseth them before God day and night, Rev. xii. 10. Some think the chief priest was accused for the sin of many of the inferior priests in marrying strange wives, which they were much guilty of after their return out of the captivity, Ezra ix. 1, 2. Neh. xiii. 38. When God is about to re-establish the priesthood, Satan objects the sins that were found among the priests as rendering them unworthy the honour designed them. It is by our own folly that we give Satan advantage against us, and furnish him with matter for reproach and accusation; and if any thing be amiss, especially with the priests, Satan will be sure to aggravate it and make the worst of it. He stood to resist him, i. e. to oppose the service he was doing for the public good. He stood at his right hand, the hand of action, to discourage him and raise difficulties in his ways. Note, When we stand before God to minister to him, or stand up for God to serve his interests, we must expect to meet with all the resistance that Satan's subtilty and



malice can give us. Let us then *resist him* that resists us, and he shall *flee from us*.

(2.) A *victorious defence* is made for him, *ver. 2. The Lord, i. e. the Lord Christ said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee*. Note, It is the happiness of the saints that the judge is their friend; the same that they are accused to is their patron and protector, and an advocate for them, and he will be sure to bring them off. (1.) Satan is here checked by one that has authority, that has conquered him and many a time silenced him. *The accuser of the brethren*, of the ministers and the ministry, is *cast out*, his indictments quashed, and his suggestions against them, as well as his suggestions to them, shewed to be malicious, frivolous and vexatious. *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. The Lord said it, i. e. the Lord our Redeemer, The Lord rebuke thee, i. e. the Lord the Creator*. The power of God is engaged for the making of the grace of Christ effectual. *The Lord restrain thy malicious rage, reject thy malicious charge, and revenge upon thee thine enmity to a servant of his*. Note, Those that belong to Christ have him ready to appear vigorously for them, then when Satan appears most *vehement* against them. He doth not parly with him, but stops his mouth immediately with this sharp reprimand, *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan*. This is the best way of dealing with that furious enemy. *Get thee behind me, Satan*. (2.) Satan is here *argued with*. He resists the priest, but let him know that his resistance, (1.) *Will be fruitless*; it will be to no purpose to attempt any thing against Jerusalem, for the *Lord hath chosen it*, and he will abide by his choice. Whatever is objected against God's people, God saw it, he foresaw it when he chose them, and yet he chose them; and therefore that can be no inducement to him now to reject them; he knew the worst of them when he chose them, and his election shall obtain. (2.) *It is unreasonable, for is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* Joshua is so, and the priesthood, and the people whose representative he is. Christ has not that to say for them for which they are to be *praised*, but that for which they are to be *pitted*. Note, Christ is ready to make the best of his people, and takes notice of every thing that is pleadable in excuse of their infirmities, so far as he from being extreme to mark what they do amiss; they have been lately *in the fire*, no wonder they are blacked and smoked, and have the smell of the fire upon them, but they are therefore to be *excused*, not to be *accused*. One can expect no other but that those who but the other day were captives in Babylon, should appear very mean and despicable. They have been lately brought out of great affliction, and is Satan so barbarous as to desire to have them thrown into affliction again? They have been wonderfully delivered *out of the fire* that God might be glorified in them, and will he then cast them off, and abandon them? No, he will not *quench the smoking flax*, the smoking fire-brand, for he snatched it out of the fire, because he intended to make use of it. Note, Narrow escapes from imminent danger are happy prefaces and powerful pleas for more eminent favours. A converted soul is a *brand plucked out of the fire* by a miracle of free grace, and therefore shall not be left to be a prey to Satan.

2. Joshua appears as one *polluted*, but is *purified*; for he represents the Israel of God who are all *as an unclean thing*, till they are washed and sanctified *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and *by the Spirit of our God*. Now observe here,

1. The impurity wherein Joshua appeared, *ver. 3. He was clothed not only in coarse, but in filthy garments*, such as did very ill become the dignity of his office, and the sanctity of his work. By the law of Moses the garments of the high priest were to be *for glory and for beauty*, *Exod. xxviii*. But Joshua's garments were a shame and reproach to him, yet in them *he stood before the angel of the Lord*; he had no clean linen wherein to minister and do the duty of his place. Now this intimates not only that the priesthood was poor and despised, and loaded with contempt, but that there was a great deal of iniquity cleaving to the holy things. The returned Jews were so *taken up with their troubles*, that they thought they needed not complain of *their sins*, and were not aware those were the great hindrances of the progress of God's work among them; because they were free from idolatry, they thought themselves chargeable with no iniquity, but God shews them there were many things amiss in them, which *retarded* the advances of God's favours toward them. There were spiritual enemies warring against them more dangerous than any of the neighbour nations. The Chaldee paraphrase saith, Joshua had sons who took unto them wives, which were not lawful for the priests to take; and we find it was so, *Ezra x. 18*. And no doubt there were other things amiss in the priesthood, *Mal. ii. 1*, yet Joshua was permitted to *stand before the angel of the Lord*. Though his children did not as they should, yet the covenant of priesthood was not broken. Note, Christ bears with his people whose hearts are upright with him, and admits them into communion with himself notwithstanding their manifold infirmities.

2. The provision that was made for his cleansing. Christ gave orders to the angels that attended him and were ready to do his pleasure, to put Joshua into a better state. Joshua presented himself before the Lord in his *filthy garments*, as an object of his pity; and Christ graciously looked upon him *with compassion*, and not, as justly he might have done, *with indignation*. Christ loathed the filthiness of Joshua's garments, yet did not put him away, but put them away. Thus God by his grace doth with those whom he chooseth to be priests to himself, he parts between them and their sins, and so prevents their sins parting between them and their God: reconciles himself to the sinner, but not to the sin.

Two things are here done for Joshua, representing a double work of divine grace wrought in and for believers.

(1.) His *filthy garments are taken from him*, *ver. 4*, the meaning of which is given us in what Christ said, and he said it as one having authority, *Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee*. The guilt of it is taken away by pardoning mercy, the stink and stain of it, by peace spoken to the conscience, and the power of it broken by renewing grace. When God forgives our sins, he *causeth our iniquity to pass from us*, that it may not appear against us to condemn us; it *passeth from us as far as the east is from the west*: when he sanctifies the nature he enables us to *put off the old man*, to cast away from us the *filthy rags* of our corrupt affections and lusts, as things we will never have any thing more to do with, will never gird to us, or appear in. Thus Christ *washeth those from their sins in his own blood*, whom he *makes to our God kings and priests*, *Rev. i. 5, 6*. Either we must be cleansed from the pollution of sin, or we shall, *as polluted, be put from that priesthood*, *Ezra ii. 62*.

(2.) He is *clothed anew*, has not only the shame of his filthiness removed, but the shame of his nakedness covered. *I will clothe thee with change of raiment*. Joshua had no clean linen of his own, but Christ will provide for him, for he will not let a priesthood of his own instituting be lost, be either contemptible before men, or unacceptable before God. The *change of raiment* here, is rich, costly raiment, such as is worn on high days; Joshua shall appear as lovely as ever he appeared loathsome: they that minister in holy things shall not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; God will make them wise, and humble, and diligent, and faithful, and examples of every thing that is good; and then Joshua is *clothed with change of raiment*. Thus those whom God makes spiritual priests are clothed with the spotless

robe of his righteousness; and appear before God in that; and with the graces of his Spirit, which are ornaments to them. The *righteousness of saints*, both imputed and implanted, is the fine linen, clean and white, with which the *bride the Lamb's wife* is arrayed, *Rev. xix. 8*.

3. Joshua is in danger of being turned out of office, but instead of that he is *re-installed*, and *established* in his office. He not only hath his sins pardoned, and is furnished with grace sufficient for himself, but as *reclus in curia*, he is restored to his former honours and trusts.

1. The *crown of the priesthood* is put upon him, *ver. 5*. This was done at the special instance and request of the prophet: I said, *Let them set a fair mitre upon his head*, as a badge of his office. Now he looks *clean*, let him also look *great*: Let him be dressed up in all the garments of the high priest. Note, when God designs the restoring and reviving of religion, he stirs up his prophets and people to pray for it, and doth it in answer to their prayers. Zechariah prayed that the angels might be ordered to set the mitre on Joshua's head, and they did immediately, and *clothed him with the priestly garments*; for no man took this honour to himself, but he that was *called of God* to it. The *angel of the Lord stood by*, as having the oversight of the work, which the created angels were employed in. He stood by as one well pleased with it, and resolved to *stand by* the orders he had given for the doing of it, and to continue his presence with that priesthood.

2. The *covenant of the priesthood* is renewed with him, which is called God's covenant of peace, *Numb. xxv. 12*. Mr. Pemble calls it the patent of his office, which is here declared and delivered to him before witnesses, *ver. 6, 7*. The angel of the Lord having taken care to make him fit for his office, (and all that God calls to any office he either finds them fit, or makes them so) invests him in it. And though he is not *made a priest with an oath*, that honour is reserved for him who is a priest after the order of Melchisedek, *Heb. vii. 21*, yet being a type of him he is inaugurated with a solemn declaration of the terms upon which he held his office. The angel of the Lord protested to Joshua that if he would be sure to do the duty of his place, he should enjoy the dignity and reward of it. Now see,

1. What the conditions are upon which he enters into his office. Let him know that he is upon his *good behaviour*, he must *walk in God's ways*, i. e. he must live a good life, and be holy in all manner of conversation; must go before the people in the paths of God's commandments, and walk circumspectly. He must also *keep God's charge*, must carefully do all the services of the priesthood, and must see to it that the inferior priests performed the duties of their place decently and in order. He must *take heed to himself*, and to *all the flock*, *Acts xx. 28*. Note, Good ministers must be good Christians, yet that is not enough, they have a trust committed to them, they are *charged* with it, and they must *keep* it with all possible care, that they may give up their account of it with joy, *1 Tim. vi. 14*.

2. What the privileges are which he may expect and be assured of, in the due discharge of his office. His patent runs, *Quamvis se bene gesserit: Let him be sure to do his part, and God will own him*. (1.) *Thou shalt judge my house*, i. e. Thou shalt preside in the affairs of the temple, and the inferior priests shall be under thy direction. Note, The power of the church and of church-rulers is not a *legislative*, but only a *judicial* power. The high-priest might not make any new laws for God's house, nor ordain any other rights of worship than what God had ordained, but he must *judge God's house*, i. e. he must see to it that God's laws and ordinances were punctually observed, must protect and encourage those that did observe them, and enquire into and punish the violation of them. (2.) *Thou shalt also keep my courts*, i. e. thou shalt have the oversight of what is done in all the courts of the temple, and shalt keep them pure and in good order for the worship to be performed in them. Note, Ministers are God's *stewards*, and they are to *keep his courts*, in honour of him who is the chief Lord, and for the preserving of equity and good order among his tenants. (3.) *I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by*, i. e. among those angels that are inspectors and assistants in this instantment. They shall *stand by* while Joshua is at work for God, and shall be as a guard to him; or he shall be highly honoured and respected as an *angel of God*, *Gal. iv. 14*. Ministers are called *angels*, *Rev. i. 20*. They that *walk in God's ways* may be said to *walk among the angels* themselves, for they do the will of God as the angels do it that are in heaven, and are their *fellow-servants*, *Rev. xix. 10*. Some make it a promise of eternal life, and of a reward of his fidelity in the future state. Heaven is not only a *palace*, a place to repose in, but a *paradise*, a garden, a place to *walk in*; and there are walks among the angels, in society with that holy and glorious company. See *Ezek. xxviii. 14*.

8. ¶ Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that set before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. 9. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. 10. In that day saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree.

As the promises made to David often slide insensibly into promises of the Messiah, whose kingdom David was a type of, so the promises here made to Joshua presently rise as far upward, and look as far forward as to Christ, whose priesthood Joshua's was now a shadow of; not only in general as it kept up the line of Aaron's priesthood, but especially as it was the reviving of that happy method of correspondence between heaven and earth, to which a great interruption had been given by the iniquity and captivity of Israel. Christ is a high priest, as Joshua was, for sinners and sufferers, to mediate for those that have been under guilt and wrath. And it was fit Joshua should understand the priesthood of Christ, because all the virtue of his priesthood, its value and usefulness to the church, depended upon and was derived from the priesthood of Christ. See,

1. To whom this promise of Christ is directed. *Ver. 8. Hear now, O Joshua*. Thou hast heard with pleasure what belongs to thyself, but behold a greater than Joshua is at hand, *hear now* concerning him; *thou*, and the rest of the priests, *thy fellows that sit before thee*, at thy feet as learners; but whom thou art to look upon as *thy fellows*, for all ye are brethren; let the high priest and all the inferior priests take notice of this, for they are *men wondered at*. They are set for signs, i. e. for types and figures of Christ's priesthood: what God now did for Joshua and his fellows was a happy omen of the coming of the Messiah promised, and would be so interpreted with a pleasing wonder by all that had understanding of the times. Or they are men wondered at for their singularity, hooted at as strange sort of people, because they *run not with others to the same excess of riot*, *1 Pet. iv. 4*. Or for their strange afflictions, and surprising deliverance out.



out of them, as *Psalms lxxi. 7. I am as a wonder unto many. They are men of wonder, they are a wonder to themselves, are amazed to think how happily their condition is altered. God's people and ministers are upon many accounts men wondered at.* The high priest and his fellows here, as the prophet and his children, *Isa. viii. 18. are for signs and for wonders.* But men's wonder at them will cease when the Messiah comes, as the stars are eclipsed by the light of the sun, for his name shall be called *Wonderful.*

2. The promise itself, which consists of several parts, all designed for the comfort and encouragement of Joshua and his friends in that great good work of building the temple, which they were now engaged in. An eye to Christ, and a believing dependence upon the promises relating to him and his kingdom, would carry them through the difficulties they met with in that and other their services.

1. The Messiah shall come. *Behold, I will bring forth my servant, the Branch.* He has been long hid, but the fulness of time is now at hand when he shall be brought forth into the world, brought forth among his people Israel. God himself undertakes to bring him forth, and therefore no doubt he will own him and stand by him. He is God's servant, employed in his work, obedient to his will, and entirely devoted to his honour and glory. He is the Branch, so he was called, *Isa. iv. 2. The branch of the Lord, Isa. xi. 1. A branch out of the roots of Jesse, Jer. xxiii. 5. A righteous branch, and Jer. xxxiii. 15. The branch of righteousness;* whose beginning was small, as a tender branch, but in time should become a great tree and fill the earth, *Isa. liii. 2. He is the branch from which all our fruit must be gathered.*

2. Many eyes shall be upon him. He is the stone laid before Joshua, alluding to the foundation or chief corner stone of the temple, which probably was laid with great solemnity in the presence of Joshua. Christ is not only the branch which is the beginning of a tree, but the foundation which is the beginning of a building, and when he shall be brought forth, seven eyes shall be upon him. The eye of his father was upon him to take care of him, and protect him, especially in his sufferings; when he was buried in the grave, as the foundation-stones are under ground, yet the eyes of heaven were upon him; buried out of men's sight but not out of God's. The eyes of all the prophets and Old Testament saints were upon this one stone; Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad. The eyes of all believers are upon him; they look unto him and are saved, as the eyes of the stung Israelites were upon the brazen serpent. Some understand this one stone to have the seven eyes in it, as the wheels had in Ezekiel's vision, and think it notes that perfection of wisdom and knowledge which Jesus Christ was endued with for the good of his church; his eyes ran to and fro through the earth.

3. God himself will beautify him, and put honour upon him. *I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts.* This stone the builders refused, as rough and unsightly, but God undertakes to smooth and polish it, nay, and to carve it, so as that it shall be the head-stone of the corner, the most beautiful in all the building. Christ was God's workmanship, and abundance of his wisdom appears in the contrivance of our redemption which will appear when the engraving is perfected. The stone is a precious stone, though laid for a foundation, and the graving of it seems to allude to the precious stones in the breast-plate of the high priest, which had the names of the tribes graven upon them, as the engraving of a signet, *Exod. xxviii. 21, 22.* In that breast plate there were twelve stones laid before Aaron, for ought appears these were lost; but there shall be one worth them all laid before Joshua; and that is Christ himself; this precious stone shall sparkle as if it had seven eyes; there shall appear a perfection of wisdom and prudence in the oracles that proceed from this breast-plate of judgment: and God will engrave the engravings thereof, he will intrust Christ with all his elect, and he shall appear as their representative and agent for them, as the high priest did when he went in before the Lord, with the names of all Israel engraven in the precious stones of his breast-plate. When God gave a remnant to Christ to be brought through grace to glory, then he engraved the graving of this precious stone.

4. By him sin shall be taken away, both the guilt and dominion of it. *I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.* When the high priest had the names of Israel engraven on the precious stones he was adorned with, he is said to bear the iniquity of the holy things, *Exod. xxviii. 38.* but the law made nothing perfect, *Heb. x. 1.* He bore the iniquity of the law as a type of Christ, but he could not remove it, the doing of that was reserved for Christ, that blessed Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world; and did it in one day, that day in which he suffered and died: that was done by the sacrifice offered that day, which could not be done by the sacrifices of ages before, no, not by all the days of atonement which from Moses to Christ returned every year. This agrees with the angel's prediction, *Dan. iv. 24. he shall finish transgressions, and make an end of sin.* And some make the engravings wherewith God engraved him to signify the wounds and stripes which were given to his blessed body, which he underwent for our transgression, for our iniquity, and by which we are healed.

5. The effect of all this shall be the sweet enjoyment which all believers shall have of themselves, and the sweet communion they shall have with one another, *ver. 10. In that day ye shall call every man his neighbour under the vine and the fig-tree,* which yield most pleasant fruit, and whose leaves also afford a refreshing shade for arbores. When iniquity is taken away, (1.) We reap precious benefits and privileges from our justification, more precious than the products of the vine or the fig-tree, *Rom. v. 1. (2.)* We repose ourselves in a sweet tranquillity, and are quiet from the fear of evil. What should terrify us when iniquity is taken away, when nothing can hurt us? We sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and by it are sheltered from the scorching heat of the curse of the law. We live as Israel in the peaceable reign of Solomon, *1 Kings iv. 24, 25.* for he is the prince of peace. (3.) We ought to invite others to come to partake with us in the enjoyment of those privileges, to call every man his neighbour, to come and sit with him for mutual converse under the vine and fig-tree, and to share with him in the fruits he is surrounded with. Gospel grace as far as it comes with power makes men neighbourly; and those that have the comfort of acquaintance with Christ themselves, and communion with God through him will be forward to court others to it. *Let us go unto the house of the Lord.*

#### C H A P. IV.

In this chapter, we have another comfortable vision, which as it was explained to the prophet, had much in it for the encouragement of the people of God in their present straits, which were so great that they thought their case helpless; that their temple could never be rebuilt, nor their city replenished; and therefore the scope of the vision is to shew that God would, by his own power, perfect the work, though the assistance given to it by its friends were never so weak, and the resistance given to it by its enemies were never so strong. Here is, (1.) The awakening of the prophet to observe the vision, *ver. 1. (2.)* The vision itself, of a candlestick with seven lamps, which were supplied with oil,

and kept burning, immediately from two olive trees that grew by it, one on either side, *ver. 2, 3. (3.)* The general encouragement hereby intended to be given to the builders of the temple to go on in that good work, assuring them that it should be brought to perfection at last, *ver. 4-10. (4.)* The particular explication of the vision for the illustration of these assurances, *ver. 11-14.*

1. AND the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, 2. And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: 3. And two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. 4. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? 5. Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. 6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. 7. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it. 8. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. 10. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven: they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Here is, 1. The prophet prepared to receive the discovery that was to be made him. The angel that talked with him came and waked him, *ver. 1.* It seems, though he was in conference with an angel, and about matters of great and public concern, yet he grew dull and was dropt asleep, as it should seem, while the angel was yet talking with him. Thus the disciples, when they saw Christ transfigured, were heavy with sleep, *Luke ix. 32.* The prophet's spirit, no doubt, was willing to have attended to that which was to be seen and heard, but the flesh was weak; his body could not keep pace with his soul in divine contemplations; the strangeness of the visions perhaps stupified him, and so he was overcome with sleep, or perhaps the sweetness of the visions composed him, and even sung him asleep. Daniel was in a deep sleep, when he heard the voice of the angel's words, *Dan. x. 9.* We shall never be fit for converse with spirits till we are got clear of these bodies of flesh. It should seem, the angel let him lose himself a little that he might be fresh to receive new discoveries, but then waked him to his surprise as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. Note, We need the Spirit of God not only to make known to us divine things, but to make us take notice of them. He wakens morning by morning, he wakens mine ear, *Isa. i. 4.* We should beg of God that whenever he speaks to us he would awaken us, and we should then stir up ourselves.

2. The discovery that was made to him when he was thus prepared. The angel asked him, what seest thou? *ver. 2.* When he was awake perhaps he had not taken notice of what was presented to his view, if he had not thus been excited to look about him. When he observed, he saw a golden candlestick; such an one as was in the temple formerly, and with the like this temple should in due time be furnished. The church is a candlestick set up for the enlightening this dark world, and the holding forth of the light of divine revelation to it; the candle is God's, the church is but the candlestick; but all of gold, noting the great worth and excellency of the church of God. This golden candlestick had seven lamps branching out from it, so many sockets, in each of which was a burning and shining light. The Jewish church was but one, and though the Jews that were dispersed it is probable had synagogues in other countries, yet they were but as so many lamps belonging to one candlestick; but now under the gospel Christ is the centre of unity, and not Jerusalem or any one place, and therefore seven particular churches are represented, not as seven lamps, but as seven several golden candlesticks, *Rev. i. 20.* This candlestick had one bowl, or common receiver on the top, into which oil was continually dropping, and from it, by seven secret pipes or passages, it was diffused to the seven lamps. So that without any further care they received oil as fast as they wanted it, (as in those which we call fountain inkhorns, or fountain pens) never wanted nor were ever glutted, and so kept always burning clear. And the bowl too was continually supplied without any care or attendance of man: for, *ver. 3.* he saw two olive-trees, one on each side the candlestick, that were so fat and fruitful, that of their own accord they poured plenty of oil continually into the bowl; which by two larger pipes, *ver. 12.* dispersed the oil to lesser ones, and so to the lamps. So that nobody needed to attend this candlestick to furnish it with oil, it tarried not for man, nor waited for the sons of men; the scope of which is to shew that God easily can, and often doth accomplish his gracious purposes concerning his church by his own wisdom and power, without any art or labour of man. And though sometimes he makes use of instruments, yet he neither needs them, nor is tied to them, but can do his work without them, and will rather than it shall be undone.

3. The enquiry which the prophet made concerning the meaning of this, and the gentle reproof given him for his dulness, *ver. 4. I answered and spake to the angel, saying, What are these, my Lord? Observe how respectfully he speaks to the angel, he called him my lord; those that would be taught must give honour to their teachers; he saw what these were, but asked what these signified? Note, It is very desirable to know the meaning of God's manifestations of himself and his mind, both in his word, by his ordinances and providences; what mean ye by these services, by these signs? and those that would understand the mind of God must be inquisitive; then shall we know, if we follow on to know, if we not only hear, but as Christ asks questions upon what we hear, *Luke ii. 46.* The angel answered him with a question, Knowest thou not what these be? intimating, that if he had considered and compared*



pared spiritual things with spiritual, he might have guessed at the meaning of these things: for he knew that there was a golden candlestick in the tabernacle, which it was the priests' constant business to supply with oil, and to keep it burning for the use of the tabernacle; when therefore he saw in vision such a candlestick with lamps always kept burning, and yet no priest to attend it, nor any occasion for them; he might discern the meaning of this to be, that though God had set up the priesthood again, yet he could carry on his own work for and in his people without them. Note, We have reason to be ashamed of ourselves that we do not more readily apprehend the meaning of divine discoveries. The angel asked the prophet this question to draw from him an acknowledgment of his own dulness and darkness, and slowness to understand, and he had it presently, *I said no my Lord; I know not what these be.* Visions had their significance, but often dark and hard to be understood, and the prophets themselves were not always aware of it at first. But those that would be taught of God must see and acknowledge their own ignorance, and their need to be taught, and must apply themselves to God for instruction. To him that gave us the cabinet, we must apply ourselves for the key wherewith to unlock it. God will teach the meek and humble, not those who are conceited of themselves, and lean on the broken reed of their own understanding.

4. The general intendment of this vision. Without a critical descant upon every circumstance of the vision, the design of it is to assure the prophet, and by him the people, that this good work of building the temple, should, by the special care of the divine providence, and the immediate influence of the divine grace, be brought to a happy issue, though the enemies of it were many and mighty, and the friends and furtherers of it few and feeble. Note, In the explication of visions and parables, we must look at the principal scope of them, and be satisfied with that, if that be clear, though we may not be able to account for every circumstance, or accommodate it to our purpose. The angel lets the prophet know in general that this vision was designed to illustrate a word, which the Lord had to say to Zerubbabel to encourage him to go on with the building of the temple. Let him know that he is a worker together with God in it, and it is a work which God will own and crown.

1. God will carry on and complete this work, as he had begun their deliverance from Babylon not by external force, but by secret operations and internal influences upon the minds of men. He saith this, who is the Lord of hosts, and could do it *et armis*, as his legions at command, but he will do it, *not by human might or power, but by his own Spirit.* What is done by his Spirit, is done by *might and power*, but it stands in opposition to visible force. Israel was brought out of Egypt, and into Canaan by *might and power*, in both these works of wonder great slaughter was made; but they were brought out of Babylon and into Canaan the second time by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working upon the spirit of Cyrus, and inclining him to proclaim liberty to them; and working upon the spirit of the captives, and inclining them to accept the liberty offered them. It was by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts that the people were excited and animated to build the temple, and therefore they are said to be *helped by the prophets of God*, because they are as the Spirit's mouth spoke to their hearts, *Ezra v. 2.* It was by the same spirit that the heart of Darius was inclined to favour and further that good work, and that the sworn enemies of it were infatuated in their councils, so that they could not hinder it as they designed. Note, The work of God is often carried on very successfully, when yet it is carried on very silently, and without the assistance of human force; the gospel temple is built not by might or power, for, *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal*, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, whose work on men's consciences is mighty to the pulling down of strong holds; thus the excellency of the power is of God and not of man. When instruments fail, let us therefore leave it to God to do his work himself by his own Spirit.

2. All the difficulties and oppositions that lie in the way, shall be got over and removed, even those that seem insuperable, *ver. 7. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.* See here, (1.) how the difficulty is represented, it is a *great mountain* unpassable and immovable. A heap of rubbish like a *great mountain* which must be got away, or the work cannot go on. The enemies of the Jews are proud and hard as great mountains; but when God has work to do, the mountains that stand in the way of it shall dwindle into mole-hills; for see here, (2.) how these difficulties are despised, *who art thou, O great mountain*, that thou shouldst stand in God's way, and think to stop the progress of his work? who art thou that lookst so big, that thou threatenest, and art thus feared? *Before Zerubbabel*, when he is God's agent *thou shalt become as a plain.* All the difficulties shall vanish, and all the objections be got over; *every mountain and hill shall be brought low*, when the way of the Lord is to be prepared, *Isa. xl. 4.* Faith will remove mountains, and make them plains. Christ is our Zerubbabel, mountains of difficulty were in the way of his undertaking, but before him they were all levelled; nothing is too hard for his grace to do.

3. The same hand that has begun this good work will perform it. *He shall bring forth the head stone, ver. 7. and again, ver. 9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house*, be it spoken to his honour, perhaps with his own hands he laid the first stone, and though it had been long retarded, and is still much opposed, yet it shall be finished at last, he shall live to see it finished, nay, and his hand shall also finish it; herein a type of Christ, who is both the *author* and the *finisher of our faith*; and his being the *author* of it is an assurance to us that he will be the *finisher*, for as for God his work is perfect; has he begun and shall he not make end? Zerubbabel shall himself bring forth the head stone with shoutings, and loud acclamations of joy among the spectators. The acclamations are no *huzzas*, but *grace, grace*, that is the burden of the triumphant songs the church sings. It may be taken, (1.) As magnifying free grace, and giving to that all the glory of what is done; when the work is finished, it must be thankfully acknowledged it was not by any policy or power of our own that it was brought to perfection, but it was grace that did it; God's good-will towards us, and his good work in us and for us. Grace, grace, must be cried not only to the head-stone, but to the foundation-stone, the corner-stone, and indeed to every stone in God's building; from first to last it is nothing of works, but all of grace, and all our crowns must be cast at the feet of free grace. *Not unto us, O Lord not unto us.* (2.) As depending upon free grace, and desiring the continuance of it for what is yet to be done. *Grace, grace*, is the language of prayer as well as of praise; now this building is finished, all happiness attend it! peace be within its walls, and in order to that, *grace.* Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon it! Note, What comes from the grace of God, may in faith and upon good grounds be committed to the grace of God, for God will not forsake the work of his own hands.

4. This shall be a full ratification of the prophecies which went before, concerning the Jews return and their settlement again. When the temple is finished, then *thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.* Note, The exact accomplishment of scripture-prophecies is a convincing proof of their divine original. Thus God confirmeth the word of his servant, by saying to Jerusalem, *Thou shalt be built, Isa. xlv. 26.* No word of God

shall fall to the ground, nor shall there fall one iota or tittle of it; Zechariah's prophecies of the approaching day of deliverance to the church, would soon appear by the accomplishment of them to be God.

5. This shall effectually silence those that looked with contempt upon the beginning of this work, *ver. 10. Who? Where is he now that despised the day of small things*, and thought this work would never come to any thing? The Jews themselves despised the foundation of the second temple, because it was likely to be so far inferior to the first, *Ezra iii. 17.* Their enemies despised the wall when it was in the building, *Neh. ii. 19-iv. 2, 3.* But let them not do it. Note, In God's work the day of small things is not to be despised. Though the instruments be weak and unlikely, God often chooseth such, by them to bring about great things. As a *great mountain* becomes a *plain* before him, when he pleaseth, so a little stone cut out of a mountain without hands comes to fill the earth, *Dan. ii. 35.* Though the beginnings be *small*, God can make the latter end greatly to *increase*: a grain of mustard-seed may become a *great tree*. Let not the dawning light be despised, for it will shine more and more to the perfect day. The day of small things is the day of *precious things*, and will be the day of *great things*.

6. This shall abundantly satisfy all the hearty well-wishers to God's interest who will be glad to see themselves mistaken in *despising the day of small things*. They that despaired of the finishing of the work, shall rejoice when they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, when they see him busy among the builders, giving orders and directions what to do, and taking care that the work be done with great exactness, that it may be both *fine and firm*. Note, it is matter of great rejoicing to all good people, to see magistrates careful and active for the edifying of the house of God, to see the plummet in the hand of those who have power to do much, if they have but a heart according to it; we see not Zerubbabel with the trowel in his hand, that is left to the workmen, the ministers, but we see him with the plummet in his hand, and it is no disparagement but an honour to him. Magistrates are to inspect ministers work, and to *speak comfortably to the Levites* that do their duty.

7. This shall highly magnify the wisdom and care of God's providence, which is always employed for the good of his church. Zerubbabel doth his part, doth as much as man can do to forward the work, but it is *with those seven, those seven eyes of the Lord*, which we read of, *chap. iii. 9.* He could do nothing if the watchful, powerful, gracious providence of God did not go before him, and go along with him in it. Except the Lord had built this house, Zerubbabel and the rest had laboured in vain, *Psal. cxvii. 1.* These eyes of the Lord are they that run to and fro through the whole earth, that take cognizance of all the creatures and all their actions, *2 Chron. xvi. 9.* and inspire and direct all, according to the divine counsels. Note, We must not think that God is so taken up with the affairs of his church as to neglect the world; but it is a comfort to us that the same all-wise, almighty providence that governs the nations of the earth, is in a particular manner conversant about the church. Those seven eyes that run through the earth, are all upon the stone that Zerubbabel is laying straight with his plummet, to see that it be well laid. And those that have the plummet in their hand must look up to those eyes of the Lord, must have a constant regard to the divine providence, and act in dependence upon its conduct and submission to its disposals.

11. ¶ Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive-trees, upon the right side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof? 12. And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? 13. And he answered me, and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. 14. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth.

Enough is said to Zechariah to encourage him, and to enable him to encourage others, with reference to the good work of building the temple which they were now about, and that was the principal intention of the vision he saw: but still he is inquisitive about the particulars, which we will ascribe not to any vain curiosity, but to the value he had for divine discoveries, and the pleasure he took in acquainting himself with them. Those that know much of the things of God cannot but have a humble desire to know more. Now observe,

1. What his enquiry was. He understood the meaning of the candlestick and its lamps. It is Jerusalem, it is the temple, and their salvation that is to go forth as a lamp that burneth, but he wants to know what are these two olive-trees, *ver. 11.* those two olive branches, *ver. 12.* Observe here, (1.) He asked. Note, Those that would be acquainted with the things of God must be inquisitive concerning those things. Ask and you shall be told. (2.) He asked twice, his first question having no reply given to it. Note, If satisfactory answers be not given to our enquiries and requests quickly, we must renew them and repeat them, and continue instant and importunate in them, and the vision shall at length speak and not lie. (3.) His second query varied somewhat from the former. He first asked what are these two olive-trees? but afterwards, what are these two olive-branches? those boughs of the tree that hung over the bowl, and distilled oil into it. When we enquire concerning the grace of God, it must be rather as it is communicated to us by the fruitful boughs of the word and ordinances, for that is one of the things revealed which belong to us and to our children, than as it is resident in the good olive where all our springs are, for that is one of the secret things, which belong not to us. (4.) In his enquiry he mentions the observations he had made upon the vision; he took notice not only of what was obvious at first sight, that the two olive trees grew, one on the right side, and the other on the left side of the candlestick; so nigh, so ready is divine grace to the church; but he observed further, upon a more narrow inspection, that the two olive branches, from which in particular the candlestick did receive of the root and fatness of the olive, as the apostle saith of the church, *Rom. xi. 17.* did empty the golden oil, i. e. the clear bright oil, the best in its kind, and of great value, as if it were *aurum potabile*, liquid gold, out of themselves through the two golden pipes. Or as the margin reads it, which by the hand of the two golden pipes empty out of themselves oil into the gold, i. e. into the golden bowl on the head of the candlestick. Our Lord Jesus emptied himself to fill us; his precious blood is the golden oil in which we are supplied with all we need.

2. What answer was given to his enquiry. Now again the angel obliged him expressly to own his ignorance before he informed him, *ver. 13. Knowest thou not what these be?* If thou knowest the church to be the candlestick, canst thou think the olive-trees that supply it with oil to be any other than the grace of God? But he owned he either did not fully understand it, or was afraid he did not rightly understand it: I said, No, my Lord, *h<sub>o</sub>u should*



should I, except some one guide me? And then he told him, *ver. 14. These are the two sons of oil*, so it is in the original, *the two anointed ones*; so we read it: rather the two *oily ones*: That which we read, *Isa. v. 1. a very fruitful hill*, is in the original *the horn of the son of oil*, a fat and fattening soil. (1.) If by the *candlestick* we understand the *visible church*, particularly that of the Jews at that time, for whose comfort it was primarily intended, these *sons of oil* that stand before the Lord of the whole earth, are the two great ordinances and offices of the magistracy and ministry, at that time lodged in the hands of those two great and good men, Zerubbabel and Joshua. Kings and priests were anointed; this prince, this priest, were *oily ones*, endued with the gifts and graces of God's Spirit, to qualify them for the work to which they were called. They stood before the Lord of the whole earth, to minister to him, and to receive direction from him; and a great influence they had upon the affairs of the church at that time; their wisdom, courage, and zeal, were continually emptying themselves into the golden bowl, to keep the lamps burning; and when they are gone, others shall be raised up to carry on the same work; Israel shall no longer be without prince and priest. Good magistrates and good ministers that are themselves anointed with the grace of God, and stand by the Lord of the whole earth, as faithful adherents to his cause, contribute very much to the maintaining and advancing of religion, and the shining forth of the word of life. (2.) If by the candlestick we understand the church of the first-born, of true believers, these *sons of oil* may be meant of Christ, and the Spirit the Redeemer, and the Comforter. Christ is not only the Messiah, the anointed one himself, but he is the good olive to his church; and from his *fountain* receive, John i. 16. And the holy Spirit is the *unction* or *anointing* which we have received, 1 John ii. 20, 27. From Christ the olive-tree, by the Spirit the olive-branch, all the golden-oil of grace is communicated to believers, which keeps their lamps burning, and without a constant supply of which they would soon go out. They stand by the Lord of the whole earth, who is in a special manner the church's Lord, for the Son was to be sent by the Father, and so was the Holy Ghost, in the time appointed, and they stand by him ready to go.

## C H A P. V.

Hitherto we have seen visions of peace only, and all the words we have heard have been good words and comfortable words. But the pillar of cloud and fire hath a black and dark side towards the Egyptians, as well as a bright and pleasant side towards Israel; so have Zechariah's visions; for God's prophets are not only his ambassadors to treat of peace with the sons of peace, but heralds to proclaim war against those that delight in war, and persist in their rebellion. Two visions here are in this chapter, by which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. God will do great things for his, and very kind ones which the faithful sons of Zion shall rejoice in, but let the sinners of Zion be afraid; for, (1.) God will reckon severely with those particular persons among them that were wicked and profane, and hated to be reformed in these times of reformation; while God is shewing kindness to the body of the nation, and loading that with his blessing, they and their families shall notwithstanding that lie under the curse, which the prophet sees in a flying roll, *ver. 1-4.* (2.) If the body of the nation hereafter degenerate, and wickedness prevails among them, it shall be carried off and hurried away with a swift destruction, under the pressing weight of divine wrath, represented by a talent of lead upon the mouth of an ephah, carried upon the wing I know not where, *ver. 5-11.*

1. THEN I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. 2. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. 3. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. 4. I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

We do not find that the prophet now needed to be awakened, as he did, chap. iv. 1. being awakened then he kept wakeful after; nay, now he needs not be so much as called to look about him, for of his own accord he turns and lifts up his eyes. This good men sometimes get by their infirmities, they make them the more careful and circumspect afterwards. Now observe,

1. What it was that the prophet saw; he looked up into the air, and behold, a flying roll: a vast large scroll of parchment which had been rolled up, and is therefore called a roll, but was now unrolled and expanded; this roll was flying upon the wings of the wind, carried swiftly through the air in open view, as an eagle that shoots down upon her prey; it is a roll like Ezekiel's that was written within and without, with lamentations, and mourning, and woe, Ezek. ii. 9, 10. As the command of the law is in writing, for certainty and perpetuity, so is the curse of the law, it writes bitter things against the sinner: what I have written, I have written, and what is written remains. The angel to engage the prophet's attention, and to raise in him a desire to have it explained, asks him *what he sees?* And he gives him this account of it, *I see a flying roll*, and as near as he can guess by his eye, it is twenty cubits long, that is ten yards, and ten cubits broad, that is five yards. The scriptures of the Old Testament and the New are rolls, in which God hath written to us the great things of his law and gospel. Christ is the master of these rolls; they are large rolls, have much in them; they are flying rolls, the angel that had the everlasting gospel to preach flew in the midst of heaven, Rev. xiv. 6. God's word runneth very swiftly, Psal. cxlvii. 15. Those that would be let into the meaning of these rolls must first tell what they see, must go as far as they can themselves; *what is written in the law, how readest thou?* Tell me that, and then thou shalt be made to understand what thou readest.

2. How it was expounded to him, *ver. 3, 4.* This flying roll is a curse, it contains a declaration of the righteous wrath of God against those sinners especially who by swearing affront God's majesty, or by stealing invade their neighbour's property. Let every Israelite rejoice in the blessings of his country with trembling, for if he swear, if he steal, if he live in any course of sin, he shall see them with his eyes, but shall not have the comfort

of them, for against him the curse is gone forth: *If I be wicked, woe to me for all this.* Now observe here,

1. The extent of this curse; the prophet sees it flying, but which way doth it steer its course? It goes forth over the face of the whole earth; not only of the land of Israel, but the whole world; for those that have sinned against the law written in their hearts, only shall by that law be judged, though they have not the book of the law. Note, All mankind is liable to the judgment of God; and wherever sinners are, any where upon the face of the whole earth, the curse of God can and will find them out and seize them. O that we could with an eye of faith see the flying roll of God's curse hanging over the guilty world as a thick cloud, not only keeping off the sun-beams of God's favour from them, but big with thunders, lightnings, and storms, ready to destroy them? how welcome then would the tidings of a Saviour be, who came to redeem us from the curse of the law by being himself made a curse for us, and like the prophet eating this roll! The vast length and breadth of this roll intimates what a multitude of curses sinners lie exposed to; God will make their plagues wonderful if they turn not.

2. The criminals against whom particularly this curse is levelled. The world is full of sin in great variety, so was the Jewish church at this time, but two sorts of sinners are here specified as the objects of this curse. (1.) Thieves; it is for every one that stealeth, that by fraud or force takes that which is not his own, especially that robs God, and converts to his own use what was devoted to God and his honour, which was a sin much complained of among the Jews at this time, *Mal. iii. 8. Neh. xiii. 10.* Sacrilege is without doubt the worst kind of thievery. He also that robs his father or mother, and saith it is no transgression, *Prov. xxviii. 24.* let him know that against him this curse is directed, for it is against every one that stealeth. The letter of the eighth commandment hath no penalty annexed to it, but the curse here is a sanction to that command. (2.) Swearers. The former against the second table, this against the first, for the curse meets those that break either table. He that swears rashly and profanely shall not be held guiltless, much less he that swears falsely, *ver. 4.* he imprecates the curse upon himself by his perjury, and so shall his doom be; God will say amen to his imprecation, and turn it upon his own head. He has appealed to God's judgment, which is always according to truth, for the confirming of a lie, and to that judgment he shall go which he hath so impiously affronted.

3. The enforcing of this curse, and the equity of it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, *ver. 4.* He that pronounceth the sentence will take care to see it executed. His bringing it forth notes, (1.) His giving it commission: it is a righteous curse, for he is a righteous God that warrants it. (2.) His giving it the setting on; he brings it forth with power, and orders what execution it shall do: and who can put by or resist the curse which a God of almighty power brings forth?

3. The effect of this curse; it is very dreadful, (1.) Upon the sinner himself; every one that steals shall be cut off, not corrected but destroyed, cut off from the land of the living: The curse of God is a cutting thing, a killing thing. He shall be cut off as on this side, cut off from this place, *i. e.* from Jerusalem, and so he that steals from this side, (it is the same word) from this place, God will not spare the sinners he finds among his own people; nor shall the holy city be a protection to the unholy; or they shall be cut off from hence, *i. e.* from the face of the whole earth over which the curse lies. Or he that steals shall be cut off on this side, and he that swears on that side, *i. e.* they shall all be cut off one as well as another, and both according to the curse; for the judgments of God's hand are exactly agreeable with the judgments of his mouth. (2.) Upon his family. It shall enter into the house of the thief, and him that swears. God's curse comes with a warrant to break open doors, and cannot be kept out by bars or locks. There where the sinner is most secure, and thinks himself out of danger, there where he promiseth himself refreshment by food and sleep, there in his own house shall the curse of God seize him: nay it shall fall not upon him only, but upon all about him for his sake. Cursed shall be his basket and his store, and cursed the fruit of his body, *Deut. xxviii. 17, 18.* The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, *Prov. iii. 33.* It shall not only beset his house, or lie at the door, but it shall remain in the midst of his house, and diffuse its malignant influences to all the parts of it; it shall dwell in his tabernacle because it is none of his, *Job xviii. 15.* It shall dwell where he dwells, and be his constant companion at bed and board to make both miserable to him. Having got possession it shall keep it, and unless he repent and reform there is no way to throw it out, or cut off the entail of it. Nay, it shall so remain in it as to consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, which though never so strong, though the timber be heart of oak, and the stones hewn out of the rocks of adamant, yet they shall not be able to stand before the curse of God. We heard the stone and the timber complaining of the owner's extortion and oppression, and groaning under the burden of it, *Isa. ii. 11.* Now here we have them delivered from that bondage of corruption. While they were in their strength and beauty, they supported sore against their will the sinner's pride and security; but when they are consumed, their ruins will to their satisfaction be standing monuments of God's justice, and lasting witnesses of the sinner's injustice. Note, Sin is the ruin of houses and families; especially the sins of injury and perjury. Who knows the power of God's anger, and the operations of his curse? Even timber and stones have been consumed by them; let us therefore stand in awe, and not sin.

5. ¶ Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. 6. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. 7. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. 8. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. 9. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. 10. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? 11. And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.



The foregoing vision was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark and hard to be understood; and some think that the scope of it is to foretell the final destruction of the Jewish church and nation, and the dispersion of the Jews, when by crucifying Christ and persecuting his gospel, they should have filled up the measure of their iniquities; therefore it is industriously set out in obscure figures and expressions, "lest the plain denunciation of the second overthrow of temple and state, might discourage them too much from going forward in the present restoration of both." So Mr. Pemble.

The prophet was contemplating the power and terror of the curse which consumes the houses of thieves and swearers, when he is bid to turn, and he shall see greater desolations than these made by the curse of God for the sin of man. *Lift up thine eyes now* and see what is here, *ver. 5. What is this that goeth forth?* Whether over the face of the whole earth as the flying roll, *ver. 3.* or only over Jerusalem, is not certain. But it seems the prophet now, either through the distance or the dimness of his sight, could not well tell what it was, but asked, *What is it?* *ver. 6.* and the angel tells him both what it is, and what it means:

9. He sees an *ephah*; a measure wherewith they measured corn; it contained *ten homers*, *Exod. xvi. 36.* and was the tenth part of a *homer*, *Ezek. xlv. 11.* it is put for any measure used in commerce, *Deut. xx. 14.* And *this is their resemblance, i. e.* the resemblance of the Jewish nation *over all the earth*, wherever they are now dispersed, or at least it will be so when their ruin draws near. They are filling up the measure of their iniquity which God hath set them; and when it is full as the *ephah* of corn, they shall be delivered into the hands of those to whom God hath sold them for their sins; they are *measured* to destruction, as an *ephah* of corn measured to the market, or to the mill. And some think the mentioning of an *ephah* which is used in buying and selling, intimates that fraud and deceit, and extortion and commerce, was a sin abounding much among them, as that people are known to be notoriously guilty of it at this day. This is a proper representation of them *through all the earth*: There is a measure set them, and they are filling it up apace. See *Matt. xxiii. 32. 1 Thess. ii. 6.*

3. He sees a woman sitting in the midst of the *ephah*; representing the sinful church and nation of the Jews in their latter and degenerate age; when the faithful city became a harlot. He that weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, measures nations and churches as in an *ephah*, so exact is he in his judicial dealings with them. God's people are called *The corn of his floor*, *Isa. xxi. 10.* And here he puts this corn into the bushel in order to his parting with it. The angel saith of the woman in the *ephah*, *This is wickedness*, it is a wicked nation, else God would not have rejected it thus; it is as wicked as *wickedness* itself, it is abominably wicked. *How is the gold become dim! Israel was holiness to the Lord*, *Jer. ii. 3.* But now *this is wickedness*; and wickedness is no where so scandalous, so odious, and many times so outrageous, as when it is found among professors of religion.

3. He sees the woman thrust down into the *ephah*, and a *talent*, or large weight of lead cast upon the mouth of it, by which she is secured, and made a close prisoner in the *ephah*, and utterly disabled to get out of it. This is designed to shew that the wrath of God against impenitent sinners is, (1.) *Unavoidable*, and what they cannot escape, they are bound over to it, concluded under sin, and shut up under the curse as this woman in the *ephah*; he would fain flee out of his hand, *Job xxvii. 22.* but he cannot. (2.) It is insupportable, and what they cannot bear up under: Guilt is upon the sinner as a *talent of lead* to sink him to the lowest hell. When Christ said of the things of Jerusalem's peace, *now they are hid from thine eyes*, that threw a *talent of lead* upon them.

4. He sees the *ephah* with the woman thus pressed to death in it, carried away into some far country. (1.) The instruments employed to do it were *two women* that had wings like those of a stork, large and strong, and to make them fly the more swiftly, they had the wind in their wings, noting the great violence and expedition with which the Romans destroyed the Jewish nation. God has not only winged messengers in heaven, but he can when he pleaseth give wings to those also whom he employs in this lower world; and when he doth so, he forwards them with the wind in their wings; his providence carries them on with a favourable gale. (2.) They bore it up in the air; noting the terrors which pursued the wicked Jews, and their being a public example of God's vengeance to the world. They lift it up between the earth and the heaven, as unworthy of either, and abandoned by both; for the Jews, when this was fulfilled, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men; *1 Thess. ii. 15.* *This is wickedness*, and this comes of it; heaven thrust out wicked angels, and earth spued out wicked Canaanites. (3.) When the prophet enquired whether they carried their prisoners whom they had now in execution, *ver. 10.* he was told they designed to build it a house in the land of Shinar. Which intimates, that the punishment of the Jews should be a final dispersion; they should be hurried out of their own country, as the chaff which the wind drives away, and should be forced to dwell in far countries, particularly in the country of Babylon, whither many of the scattered Jews went after the destruction of their country by the Romans, as they did also to other countries, especially in the Levant parts; not to sojourn in their former captivity for seventy years, but to be nailed down for perpetuity: There the *ephah* shall be established, and set upon her own base. Which intimates, (1.) That their calamity shall continue from generation to generation, and they shall be so dispersed, that they shall never unite or incorporate again; they shall settle in a perpetual unsettlement, and Cain's doom shall be theirs, to dwell in the land of shaking. (2.) That their iniquity shall continue too, and their hearts shall be hardened in it; blindness is happened unto Israel, and they are settled upon the lees of their own unbelief: their wickedness is established upon its own basis. God has given them a spirit of slumber, *Rom. xi. 8.* lest at any time they should convert and be healed.

## CHAP. VI.

The two kingdoms of providence and grace are what we are all very nearly interested in, and therefore are concerned to acquaint ourselves with, all our temporal affairs being in a necessary subjection to the divine providence, and all our spiritual and eternal concerns in a necessary dependence upon the divine grace; and these two are represented to us in this chapter, the former by a vision, the latter by a type. Here is, (1.) God, as king of nations, ruling the world by the ministry of angels, in the vision of the four chariots, *ver. 1-8.* (2.) God, as king of saints, ruling the church by the mediation of Christ, in the figure of Joshua the high priest crowned, the ceremony performed, and then explained concerning Christ, *ver. 9-15.*

1. AND I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains

were mountains of brass. 2. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; 3. And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grised and bay horses. 4. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these my lord? 5. And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the LORD of all the earth. 6. The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grised go forth toward the south country. 7. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. 8. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.

The prophet is forward to receive this vision, and as if he expected it he turned and lifted up his eyes and looked. Though this was the seventh vision he had had, yet he does not think he has had enough, for the more we know of God and his will, if we know it aright, the more desirous we shall be to get a further acquaintance with God. Now observe here,

1. The sight that the prophet had of four chariots drawn by horses of divers colours; together with the explication of the sight, *ver. 1-5.* He did not look long but he discovered that which was worth seeing, and which would serve very much for the encouraging of himself and his friends in this dark day. We are very much in the dark concerning the meaning of this vision. Some by the four chariots understand the four monarchies; and then they read, *ver. 5. These are the four winds of the heavens*, and suppose that therein reference is had to *Dan. vii. 2.* where Daniel saw in vision the four winds of the heavens striving upon the great sea, representing the four monarchies. The Babylonian monarchy they think is here represented by the red horses, which are not afterwards mentioned, because that monarchy was now extinct. The second chariot with the black horses, is the Persian monarchy, which went forth northward against the Babylonians, and quieted God's Spirit in the north country, by executing his judgments on Babylon, and freeing the Jews from their captivity. The white, the Grecians, go forth after them into the north for they overthrow the Persians. The grised, the Romans, who conquered the Grecian empire, are said to go forth toward the south country; because Egypt, which lay southward, was the last branch of the Grecian empire that was subdued by the Romans. The bay horses had been with the grised, but afterwards went forth by themselves; and by these they understand the Goths and Vandals, who with their victorious arms walked to and fro through the earth; or the Seleucidae and Lagidae, the two branches of the Grecian empire. Thus Grotius and others.

But I incline rather to understand this vision more generally, as designing to represent the administration of the kingdom of providence, in the government of this lower world. The angels are often called the chariots of God, as *Psal. lxxviii. 17.-xviii. 10.* The various providences of God concerning nations and churches, are represented by the different colours of horses, *Rev. vi. 2-4, 5-8.* And so we may observe here, /

1. That the counsels and decrees of God are the spring and original of all events, and they are immovable, as mountains of brass. The chariots came from between the two mountains, for God performeth the thing that is appointed for us: his appointments are the great originals, and his performances are but copies from them: he doth all according to the counsel of his will. We could as soon grasp the mountains in our arms, as comprehend the divine counsels in our finite understandings; and as soon remove mountains of brass, as alter any of God's purposes; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Whatever the providences of God are concerning us, as to public or private affairs, we should see them all coming from between the mountains of brass; and therefore see it as much our folly to quarrel with them, as it is our duty to acquiesce in them. Who may say to God, *What dost thou, or why dost thou so?* *Acts ii. 23.-iv. 28.*

2. That God executeth his decrees in the works of providence, which are as chariots, in which he rides as a prince in an open chariot, to shew his glory to the world; in which, as in chariots of war, he rides forth conquering, and to conquer, and triumphing over all the enemies of his glory and government. God is great and terrible in his doings, *Psal. lxxiii. 3.* and in them we see the goings of our God, our King, *Psal. lxxviii. 24.* His providences move swiftly and strongly as chariots, but all directed and governed by his infinite wisdom and sovereign will, as chariots by their drivers.

3. That the holy angels are the ministers of God's providence, and are employed by him as the armies of heaven, for the executing of his counsels among the inhabitants of the earth, they are the chariots, or which comes all to one, they are the horses that draw the chariots, great in power and might; and who, like the horse that God himself describeth, *Job xxxix. 19, &c.* are clothed with thunder; are terrible, but cannot be terrified, or made afraid; they are chariots of fire, and horses of fire, to carry one prophet to heaven, and guard another on earth. They are as observant of, and obsequious to the will of God, as well managed horses are to their rider or driver. Not that God needs them or their services, but he is pleased to make use of them, that he may put honour upon them, and encourage our trust in his providence.

4. That the events of providence have different aspects, and the face of the times often changeth. The horses in the first chariot were red, signifying war and bloodshed, blood to the horses' bridles, *Rev. xiv. 20.* Those in the second chariot were black, signifying the dismal melancholy consequences of war; it puts all into mourning, lays all waste, introduceth famines and pestilences, and desolations, and makes whole lands to languish. Those in the third chariot were white, signifying the return of comfort, and peace, and prosperity, after these dark and dismal times; though God cause grief to the children of men, yet will he have compassion. Those in the fourth chariot, were of a mixt colour, grised and bay; some speckled and spotted, and ash-coloured, signifying events of different complexions interwoven and counterchanged; a day of prosperity, and a day of adversity, set the one over against the other: the cup of providence in the hand of the Lord is full of mixture, *Psal. lxxv. 8.*

5. That all the instruments of providence, and all the events of it come from God, and from him they receive their commissions and instructions, *ver. 5. These are the four spirits of heaven*, the four winds, so some, which seem



seem to blow as they list, from the various points of the compass; but God has them in his fists, and brings them out of his treasuries. Or rather, these are the angels that go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth, to attend upon him, and minister to him; to behold his glory in the upper world, which is their blessedness, and to serve his glory in the lower world, which is their business. They stand before him as the Lord of the whole earth, to receive orders from him, and give up their accounts to him concerning their services on this earth, for it is all within his jurisdiction. But when he appoints, they go forth as messengers of his counsels, and ministers of his justice and mercy. Those secret motions and impulses upon the spirits of men, by which the designs of Providence are carried on, some think are these four spirits of the heavens which go forth from God, and fulfil what he appoints, who is the God of the spirits of all flesh.

6. That there is an admirable beauty in providence, and one event serves for a balance to another, *ver. 6. The black horses went forth*, carrying with them very dark and melancholy events, such as made every person and every thing look black, but presently *the white went forth after them*, carrying joy to them that mourned, and by a new turn given to affairs, making them to look pleasant again. Such are God's dealings with his church and people: if the black horses go forth, the white ones presently go after them, for as affliction abounds, consolation much more abounds.

7. That the common general aspect of providence is mixed and compounded. The grided and bay horses were both in the fourth chariot, *ver. 3.* and though they went forth at first towards the south country, yet afterwards they sought to walk to and fro through the earth, and were directed to do so, *ver. 7.* If we go to and fro through the earth we shall find the events of providence neither all black nor all white, but ash-coloured or gray, mixed of black and white, for such is the world we live in, that before us is unmixed. Here we are singing at the same time of mercy and judgment, and we must sing unto God of both, *Psal. ci. 1.* and labour to accommodate ourselves to God's will and design in the mixtures of providence, rejoicing in our comforts as though we rejoiced not, because they have their allays; and weeping for our afflictions as though we wept not, because there is so much mercy mixed with them.

8. That God is well pleased with all the operations of his own providence, *ver. 8. These have quieted my spirit*, these black horses which speak extraordinary judgments, and the white ones which speak extraordinary deliverances, both which went toward the north country (while the common mixed providences went all the world over.) These have quieted my spirit in the north country, which had of late been the most remarkable scene of action with reference to the church, *i. e.* by these uncommon appearances and actings of providence God's wrath is executed upon the enemies of the church, and his favours conferred upon the church, both which had long been deferred, and in both God had fulfilled his will, accomplished his word and so quieted his Spirit. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; and as he speaks, *Isa. i. 24.* made himself easy.

9. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me saying, 10. Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; 11. Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua, the son of Josedek the high priest; 12. And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the BRANCH, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: 13. Even he shall build the temple of the LORD, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. 14. And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD. 15. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.

God did not only at sundry times, but in divers manners speak in times past by the prophets to his church. In the former part of this chapter he spoke by a vision, which the prophet only saw himself; here in this latter part he speaks by a sign or type, which many saw, and which, as it was explained, was an illustrious prediction of the Messiah, as the priest and king of his church. Here is,

1. The significant ceremony which God appointed, and that was the coronation of Joshua the high-priest, *ver. 10, 11.* It is observable that there should be two eminent types of Christ in the Old Testament, that were both named Joshua, the same name with Jesus; and by the LXX. and in the New Testament, rendered Jesus, *Acts vii. 45.* Joshua the chief captain, a type of Christ, the captain of our salvation, and Joshua the chief priest, a type of Christ, the high-priest of our profession; and both in their day, saviours and leaders into Canaan. And this is peculiar to Joshua the high-priest, that here was something done to him by the divine appointment, on purpose that he might be a type of Christ; a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was both a king and a priest. Joshua was far from being ambitious of a crown, and the people of having a crowned head over them; but the prophet, to the great surprise of both, is ordered to crown Joshua as if he had been a king. And as Zerubbabel's prudence and piety kept this from being any affront to him, as the setting up of a rival with him; so God's providence kept the kings of Persia from taking umbrage at it, as raising a rebellion against them. In doing what we are sure is God's pleasure, as this was, we may well venture men's displeasure.

1. Here were some Jews come from Babylon that brought an offering to the house of God: some of the captivity, here named to their honour, that came from Babylon on a visit to Jerusalem: they ought to have bid a final farewell to Babylon, and to have come and settled with their brethren in their own land; and for their remissness and indifferency in not doing so, they thought to atone by this visit. Perhaps they came as ambassadors from the body of the Jews that were in Babylon; who lived there in ease and fulness; and hearing that the building of the temple went on slowly for want of money, they sent them with an offering of gold and silver for the ser-

vice of the house of God. Note, Those that by reason of distance or otherwise cannot forward a good work by their persons, must, as they are able, forward it by their purses; if some find hands, let others fill them.

2. Time and place are appointed for the prophet to meet them. They thought to bring their present to the priest, God's ordinary minister; but God has a prophet, an extraordinary one, ready to receive them and it; which would be an encouragement to them, who in their captivity had so often complained, *We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet*; and would invite them and others to re-settle in their own land, which then began to look like itself, like a holy land, when the spirit of prophecy was revived in it. Zechariah, was ordered to give them the meeting the same day they came (for when they were arrived they would lose no time, but present their offering presently) and to bid them welcome, assuring them that God now accepted their gifts. He was to meet them in the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah who probably was receiver-general for the temple, and kept the treasures of it. They brought their gold and silver to be employed about the temple; but God ordered it to be used in honour of one greater than the temple, *Matt. xii. 6.*

3. Crowns are to be made, and put upon the head of Joshua, *ver. 11.* It is supposed that there were two crowns provided, one of silver, and the other of gold: the former (as some think) noting his priestly dignity, the latter his kingly dignity. Or rather, he being a priest already, and having a crown of gold, of pure gold already, to signify his honour and power as a priest, these crowns of silver and gold both signify the royal dignity; the crown of silver being, perhaps, designed to typify the kingdom of the Messiah, when he was here on earth, for then he was the King of Israel. John i. 49. but the crown of gold, his kingdom in his exalted state; the glory of which as far exceeded that of the former, as gold doth silver. The sun shines as gold when he goes forth in his strength; and the beams of the moon, when she walketh in brightness, we call silver beams. Those that had worshipped the sun and moon, shall now fall down before the golden and silver crowns of the exalted Redeemer, before whom the sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded, being both out-shone.

2. The signification which God gave of this ceremony. Every one would be ready to ask what is the meaning of Joshua's being crowned thus; and the prophet is as ready to tell them the meaning of it. Upon this speaking sign is grafted a prediction, and the sign was used to make it the more taken notice of, and the better remembered. Now the promise is,

1. That God will, in the fulness of time, raise up a great high-priest like Joshua. Tell Joshua that he is but the figure of one that is to come, a faint shadow of him, *ver. 12. Speak unto him*, in the name of the Lord of hosts, that the man whose name is the BRANCH, shall grow up out of his place, out of Bethlehem the city of David, the place appointed for his birth, though the family be a root in a dry ground, yet this branch shall spring out of it; as in spring when the sun returns, the flowers spring out of their roots, they lay buried out of sight, and out of mind. He shall grow up from himself, so some read it, *propria virtute*, shall be exalted in his own strength.

2. That as Joshua was an active, useful instrument in building the temple, so the man, the Branch, shall be the master-builder, the sole builder of the spiritual temple, the gospel church. He shall build the temple of the Lord: and it is repeated again, *ver. 13. Even he shall build the temple of the Lord*: he shall grow up to do good, to be an instrument of God's glory, and a great blessing to mankind. Note, The gospel church is the temple of the Lord, a spiritual house, *1 Pet. ii. 5.* a holy temple, *Eph. ii. 21.* In the temple God made discoveries of himself to his people, and there he received the service and homage of his people; so in the gospel church, the light of divine revelation shines by the word, and the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered. Now Christ is not only the foundation, but the founder of this temple by his Spirit and grace.

3. That Christ shall bear his glory. Glory is a burden, but not too heavy for him to bear, who upholdeth all things. The cross was his glory, and he bore that; so was the crown an exceeding weight of glory, and he bears that. The government is upon his shoulders, and in it he bears the glory, *Isa. ix. 6. They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house*, *Isa. xxii. 24.* It becomes him, and he is *par negotio*, well able to bear it. The glory of the priesthood and royalty, had been divided between the house of Aaron and that of David; but now he alone shall bear all the glory of both. That which he shall bear, which he shall undertake, shall be indeed the glory of Israel, and they must wait for that; and in prospect of that must be content in the want of that external glory which they formerly had. He shall bear such a glory as shall make the glory of this latter house greater than that of the former. He shall lift up the glory, so it may be read; the glory of Israel had been thrown down and depressed, but he shall raise it out of the dust.

4. That he should have a throne, and be both priest and king upon his throne. A throne notes both dignity and dominion, an exalted honour, with an extensive power. (1.) This priest shall be a king; and his office as a priest, shall be no diminution to his dignity as a king. He shall sit and rule upon his throne. Christ, as a priest, ever lives to make intercession for us, but he doth it sitting at his Father's right hand, as one having authority, *Heb. viii. 1.* We have such a high priest as Israel never had, for he is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, which puts a pre-emptive virtue into his mediation: he that appears for us within the veil, is one that sits and rules there. Christ that is ordained to offer sacrifices for us is authorized to give law to us. He will not save us unless we be willing he should govern us. God has prepared him a throne in the heavens; and if we would have any benefit by that, we must prepare him a throne in our hearts, and be willing and glad he should sit and rule upon that throne; and to him every thought within us must be brought into obedience. (2.) This king shall be a priest; a priest upon his throne: with the majesty and power of a king, he shall have the tenderness and simplicity of a priest: who being taken from among men, is ordained for men, and can have compassion on the ignorant, *Heb. v. 1, 2.* In all the acts of his government as a king are his, then look upon his throne, though a throne of glory and a throne of judgment, with terror and amazement; for as there is a rainbow about the throne, so he is a priest upon the throne.

5. That the counsel of peace should be between them both. That is (1.) Between Jehovah, and the man the Branch; between the Father and the Son: the counsels concerning the peace to be made between God and man, by the mediation of Christ, shall be concerted, *i. e.* shall appear to have been concerted by infinite wisdom in the covenant of redemption; and that the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter. Or rather, (2.) Between the priest and the throne, between the priestly and kingly office of Jesus Christ. The man the Branch must grow up to carry on a counsel of peace, peace on earth, and in order to that, peace with heaven. God's thoughts towards us, were thoughts of peace, and in prosecution of them, he exalted his Son Christ Jesus to be both a prince and a saviour; gave him a throne, but with this proviso, that he should be a priest upon his throne; and by executing the two offices of a priest and king, should bring about that great undertaking of man's reconciliation to God, and happiness in



in God. Some think it alludes to the former government of the Jews state wherein the king and priest, several officers, did take counsel one with and of another, for the maintenance of peace and prosperity in church and state; as old Zerubbabel and Joshua now, I may add, and the prophets of God helping them; so shall the peace and welfare of the gospel church, and of all believers, be wrought, though not by two several persons, yet by virtue of two several offices meeting in one; Christ purchasing all peace by his priesthood, and maintaining and defending it by his kingdom! (So Mr. Pemble.) And his prophetic office is serviceable to both in this great design.

6. That there should be a happy coalition between Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, and they should both meet in Christ, the priest upon his throne, as the center of their unity, ver. 15. *They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord.* Some understand it of the Jews that were now afar off in Babylon, that staid behind in captivity, to the great discouragement of their brethren that were returned, who wanted their help in building of the temple. Now God promiseth that many of them, and some of other nations too, proselyted to the Jewish religion, should come in and lend an helping hand to the building of the temple, and many hands would make light work. The kings of Persia contributed to the building of the temple, *Ezra vi. 8.* and the furnishing of it, *Ezra vii. 19, 20.* And in after-times Herod the Great and others that were strangers, helped to beautify and enrich the temple. But it has a further reference to that temple of the Lord, which the man the Branch was to build: the Gentiles, *strangers afar off*, shall help to build it, for from among them God will raise up ministers that shall be workers together with Christ about that building; and all the Gentile converts shall be stones added to this building, so that it shall grow up to a holy temple, *Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22.* When God's temple is to be built, he can fetch in those that are *afar off*, and employ them in the building of it.

7. That the accomplishment of this would be a mighty confirmation of the truth of God's word. *Ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.* That promise, that those that were *afar off* should come and assist them in building the temple of the Lord, was as it were the giving of them a sign; by this they might be assured that the other promises should be fulfilled in due time, this should be fulfilled now very speedily; it was so; for those that had been their enemies and accusers, in obedience to the king's edict, became their helpers, and did speedily what they were ordered to do for the furtherance of the work, and by that means the work went on and was finished, see *Ezra vi. 13, 14.* Now by this surprising assistance which they had from afar off in building the temple, they might know that Zechariah who told them of it before was sent of God, and therefore his word concerning the man, the Branch, should be fulfilled.

8. That these promises were strong obligations to obedience; for *this shall come to pass*, you shall have help in building the temple, *if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord God.* You shall have the help of foreigners in building the temple, if you will but set about it in good earnest yourselves. The assistance of others, instead of being an excuse for our slothfulness, should be a spur to our industry. You shall have the benefit and comfort of all those promises, if you make conscience of your duty. They must know that they are upon their good behaviour; and though their God is coming towards them in a way of mercy, they cannot expect him to proceed in it, unless they conform to his laws. Note, That which God requires of us to qualify us for his favour, is obedience to his revealed will; and it must be a diligent obedience: We cannot obey the voice of God without a great deal of care and pains, nor will our obedience be accepted of God unless it be laboured by us.

3. The provision that was made to preserve the remembrance of this. The crowns that were used in this solemnity were not given to Joshua, but must be kept for a memorial in the temple of the Lord, ver. 14. Either they were laid up in the temple treasury, or (as the Jews tradition is) they were hung up in the windows of the temple in the view of all, in *perpetuam rei memoriam*; for a traditional evidence of the promise of the Messiah, and this typical transaction used for the confirmation of that promise. The crowns were delivered up to them who found the materials (and some think their names were engraven on the crowns) to be preserved as a public testimony of their pious liberality, and an encouragement to others in like manner to bring presents to the house of God. Note, Various means were used for the support of the faith of the Old Testament saints, who waited for the consolation of Israel, till the time, the set time for it came.

## CHAP. VII.

*We have done with the visions, but not with the revelations of this book; the prophet sees no more such signs as he had seen, but still the word of the Lord came to him. In this chapter we have, (1.) A case of conscience proposed to the prophet by the children of the captivity concerning fasting; whether they should continue their solemn fasts which they had religiously observed during the seventy years of their captivity, ver. 1-3. (2.) The answer to this question: which is given in this and the next chapter: And this answer was given, not all at once, but by peace-meal, and it should stem, at several times, for here are four distinct discourses that have all of them reference to this case, each of them prefaced, with the word of the Lord came, in this chapter, ver. 4-8. and chap. viii. 1-18. And the method of them is very observable: In this chapter, (1.) The prophet sharply reproves them for the mismanagement of their fasts, ver. 4-7. (2.) He exhorts them to reform their lives, which would be the best way of fasting, and to take heed of those sins which brought those judgments upon them, which they kept these fasts in memory of, ver. 8-14. And then in the next chapter having searched the wound he binds it up, and heals it with gracious assurances of great mercy God had yet in store for them, by which he would turn their fasts into feasts.*

1. **AND** it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; 2. When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the LORD. 3. And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets; saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? 4. Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5. Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto

me, even to me? 6. And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? 7. Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?

This occasional sermon which the prophet preached, and which is recorded in this and the next chapter, was above two years after the former, in which he gave them an account of his visions, as appears by comparing the date of this, ver. 1. in the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius, with the date of that, chap. i. 1. in the eighth month of the second year of Darius; not that Zechariah was idle all that while, it is expressly said that he and Haggai continued prophesying till the temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius, *Ezra vi. 14.* But during that time he did not preach any sermon that was afterwards published, and left upon record as this here; (God may be honoured, his work done and his interest served by word of mouth as well as by writing; and by inculcating and pressing what has been taught, as well as by advancing something new. Now here we have,

1. A case proposed concerning fasting. Some persons were sent to enquire of the priests and prophets whether they should continue to observe their yearly fasts, particularly that in the fifth month, as they had done. Whether the case was put by those that yet remained in Babylon, who being deprived of the benefit of the solemn feasts which God's ordinance appointed them, made up the want by the solemn fasts which God's providences called them to; or by those that were returned but lived in the country, as some rather incline to think, because they are called the *people of the land*, ver. 5. But as to that, the answer given to the messengers of the captive Jews, might be directed not to them only, but to *all the people.* Observe,

1. Who they were that came with this enquiry. Sherezer and Regem-melech; persons of some rank and figure; for they came *with their men*, and did not think it below them, or any disparagement to them, to be sent on this errand, but rather an addition to their honour to be, (1.) *Attendants in God's house*, there to do duty, and receive orders. The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ. (2.) *Agents for God's people* to negotiate their affairs. Men of estates having more leisure than men of business, ought to employ their time in the service of the public, and by doing good they make themselves truly great; the messengers of the churches were the glory of Christ, 2 Cor. viii. 23.

2. What the errand was upon which they came. They were sent perhaps, not with gold and silver, as those, chap. vi. 10, 11. or if they were, that is not mentioned, but upon the two great errands which should bring us all to the house of God, (1.) *To intercede with God for his mercy.* They were sent to pray before the Lord, and some think (according to the usage then) to offer sacrifice, with which they offered up their prayers. The Jews in captivity prayed towards the temple, as appears, *Dan. vi. 10.* but now it was in a fair way to be rebuilt, they sent their representatives to pray in it, remembering what God had said that his house should be called a house of prayer for all people, *Isa. lvi. 7.* in prayer we must set ourselves as before the Lord, must see his eye upon us, and have our eye up to him. (2.) *To enquire of God concerning his mind.* Note, When we offer up our requests to God, it must be with a readiness to receive instructions from him; for if we turn away our ear from hearing his law, we cannot expect that our prayers should be acceptable to him. We must therefore desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, that we may enquire there, *Psal. xvii. 4.* to ask not only, Lord, what wilt thou do for me? but, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

3. Whom they consulted: They spoke to the priests that were in the house of the Lord, and to the prophets; the former were an oracle for ordinary cases, the latter for extraordinary; they were blessed with both, and would try if either could acquaint them with the mind of God in this case. Note, God having given diversities of gifts to men, and all to profit with, we should make use of all as there is occasion. They were not so wedded to the priests, their stated ministers, as to distrust the prophets who appeared by the gifts given them, well qualified to serve the church; nor yet were they so much enamoured with the prophets as to despise the priests, but they spoke both to the priests and to the prophets: and in consulting both gave glory to the God of Israel, and that one Spirit who worketh all in all. God might speak to them either by *urim*, or by prophets, 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. and therefore they would not neglect either. The priests and the prophets were not jealous one of another, nor had any differences among themselves, let not the people then make differences between them, but thank God they had both. The prophets did indeed reprove what was amiss in the priests, but at the same time told the people, that the priests lips should keep knowledge, and they must enquire the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts, *Mal. ii. 7.* Note, Those that would know God's mind should consult God's ministers, and in doubtful cases ask advice of those whose special business it is to search the scriptures.

4. What the case was which they desired satisfaction in, ver. 3. *Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself as I have done these so many years?* Observe, 1. What had been their past practice, not only during the seventy years of the captivity, but to this time, which was twenty years after the liberty proclaimed them; they kept up solemn, stated fasts, for humiliation and prayer, which they religiously observed, according as their opportunities were, in their closets, families or such assemblies for worship as they had. In the case here they mention only one, that of the fifth month; but it appears by chap. viii. 19. that they observed four anniversary fasts. One in the fourth month, (June 17.) in remembrance of the breaking up of the wall of Jerusalem, *Jer. lii. 6.* Another in the fifth month, (July 4.) in remembrance of the burning of the temple, *Jer. lii. 12, 13.* Another in the seventh month, (September 3.) in remembrance of the killing of Gedaliah, which completed their dispersion; and another in the tenth month, (December 10.) in remembrance of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxv. 1. Now it was very commendable in them to keep those fasts, thus to humble themselves under those humbling providences, by which God called them to weeping and mourning; thus to accommodate themselves to their troubles and prepare themselves for deliverance. It would likewise be a means of possessing their children betimes with a due sense of the hand of the Lord gone out against them.

5. What was their present doubt. Whether they should continue these fasts or no? The case is put as by a single person, *should I weep?* But it was the case of many, and the satisfaction of one would be a satisfaction to the rest; or perhaps many had left it off; but the query will not be determined by the practice of others, if God will have him to continue it he will, whatever others do. His fasting is described by his weeping, separating himself. A religious fast must be solemnized, not only by abstinence, here called separating ourselves from the ordinary lawful comforts of life, but by a godly sorrow for sin, here expressed by weeping. Should I still keep



Keep such to afflict the soul as I have done these so many years? It is said, *ver. 5.* to be seventy years computed from the last captivity, as before, *chap. i. 12.* The inquiry intimates a readiness to continue it, if God so appoint, though it be a mortification to the flesh. (1.) Something is to be said for the continuance of these fasts; fasting and praying is good work at any time, and doth good; we have always both cause enough and need enough to humble ourselves before God. To throw off these fasts would be an evidence of their being too secure, and a cause of their being more so. They were still in distress and under the tokens of God's displeasure, and it is unwise for the patient to break off his course of physic while he is sensible of such remains of his distemper. But, (2.) There is something to be said for the letting fall of these fasts. God had changed the method of his providences concerning them, and was returned in ways of mercy to them, and ought not they then to change the method of their duties? Now the bridegroom is returned, why should the *children of the bride-chamber fast*? Every thing is beautiful in its season. And as to the fast of the fifth month, which is that they particularly enquire of, that being kept in remembrance of the burning of the temple, might seem to be superseded rather than any of the other, because the temple was now in a fair way to be rebuilt. But having long kept up this fast they would not have it off without advice, and without asking and knowing God's mind in the case. Note, A good method of religious services which we have found beneficial to ourselves and others, ought not to be altered without good reason, and therefore not without mature deliberation.

2. An answer given to this case. And it should seem though the question looked plausible enough, they that proposed it were not conscientious in it, for they were more concerned about the ceremony than about the substance: they seemed to boast of their fasting and to upbraid God Almighty with it, that he had not sooner returned in mercy to them, for we have done it *these so many years*. As those, *Ihu. lviii. 3.* *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?* And some think that an unbelief and distrust of the promises of God was at the bottom of their inquiry, for if they had given them the credit that was due to them, they needed not to doubt but that their fasts ought to be laid aside, now the occasion of them was over.

And therefore the first answer to their enquiry is a very sharp reproof of their hypocrisy, directed not only to the people of the land, but to the priests who had set up these fasts, and perhaps some of them were for keeping them up to serve some purpose of their own. Let them all take notice that whereas they thought they had made God very much their debtor by these fasts, they were much mistaken, for they were not acceptable to him, unless they had been observed in a better manner, and to better purpose.

1. *What they did that was good was not done aright, ver. 5.* *You fasted and mourned,* they were not chargeable with the omission or neglect of the duty, though it was displeasing to the body, thy fasts were *continually before me*, *Psal. l. 8.* but they had not managed them aright. Note, Those that come to enquire of their duty, must be willing first to be told of their faults. And those that seem zealous for the outside of a duty ought to examine themselves faithfully whether they have the regard they ought to have to the inside of it.

(1.) They had not an eye to God in their fasting. *Did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?* He appeals to their own consciences, they will witness against them, that they had not been sincere in it, much more will God who is greater than the heart, and knows all things. You know very well *you did not at all fast to me: in fasting did you fast to me?* There was the crease and form of the duty, but none of the life, and soul, and power of it. Was it to me, even to me? The repetition intimates what a great deal of stress is laid upon this as the main matter, in that and other holy exercises that they be done to God, even to him, with an eye to his word as our rule, and his glory as our end in them, seeking to please him and to obtain his favour, and studious by the sincerity of our intentions to approve ourselves to him. When this was wanting every fast was but a jest. To fast, and not fast to God, was to mock him and provoke him, and could not be pleasing to him. Those that make fasting a cloak for sin, as Jezebel's fast, or by it make their court to men for their applause, as the Pharisees, or that rest in outward expressions of humiliation, while their hearts are unhumbled, as Ahab, do they fast to God, even to him? *Is this the fast that God hath chosen?* *Ihu. lviii. 5.* If the solemnities of our fasting, though frequent, long and severe, do not serve to put an edge upon devout affections, to quicken prayer, to increase godly sorrow, and to alter the temper of our minds, and the course of our lives for the better, they do not at all answer the intention, and God will not accept them as performed to him, even to him.

(2.) They had the same eye to themselves in their fasting, that they had in their eating and drinking, *ver. 6.* *When ye did eat, and when ye did drink* on other days, nay, perhaps on your fast-days, in the observation of which you could, when you saw cause, dispense with yourselves, and take a liberty to eat and drink, and did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? Have you not always done as you had a mind yourselves? Why then do you now pretend a desire to know the mind of God? In your religious feasts and thanksgivings you have had no more an eye to God than in your fasts. Or rather it refers to their common meals; they did no more design the honour of God in their fasting and praying, than they did in their eating and drinking; but self was still the center in which the lines of all their actions natural, civil, and religious, met. They needed not be in such care about the continuance of their fasts, unless they had kept them better. Note, we miss our end in eating and drinking when we eat to ourselves, and drink to ourselves, whereas we should eat and drink to the glory of God, *1 Cor. x. 13.* that our bodies may be fit to serve our souls in his service.

3. The principal good thing they should have done was left undone, *ver. 7.* *Should ye not hear the words which the Lord has cried by the former prophets?* Yes, that you should have done on your fast-days; it was not enough to weep and separate yourselves on your fast-days, in token of your sorrow for the judgments you were under, but you should have searched the scriptures of the prophets, that you might have seen what was the ground of God's controversy with your fathers, and might have taken warning by their miseries not to tread in the steps of their iniquities. You ask, shall you do as you have done in fasting? No, you must do that which you have not yet done, you must repent of your sins, and reform your lives, that is it that we now call you to, and it is the same that the former prophets called your fathers to. To affect them the more with the mischief that sin had done them, that they might be brought to repent of it, he puts them in mind of the former flourishing state of their country: *Jerusalem was then inhabited and in prosperity*, that is now desolate and in distress; the cities round about that are now in ruins were then inhabited too and in peace; the country likewise was very populous. Men inhabited the south of the plain, which was not at all fortified, and yet they lived safely, and which was fruitful, and so they lived plentifully; but then God by the prophets cried to them, as one in earnest, and importunate with them, to amend their ways and doings, or else their prosperity would soon be at an end. Now, saith the prophet, you should have taken notice of that and have inferred, that which was re-

quired of them for the preventing of the judgments, and which they did not, is required of you for the removal of the judgments, and if you do it not, all your fasting and weeping signifies nothing. Note, the words of the late prophets agree with those of the former; and whether people are in prosperity or adversity, they must be called upon to leave their sins and do their duty; this must still be the burden of every song.

8. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, 9. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: 10. And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor: and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. 11. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. 12. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. 13. Therefore it is come to pass, that, as he cried, and they would not hear: so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts. 14. But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not: thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

What was said, *ver. 7.* that they should have heard the words of the former prophets, is here enlarged upon for warning to these hypocritical enquirers, who continued their sins, when they very precisely asked, whether they should continue their fasts. This prophet had before put them in mind of their fathers' disobedience to the calls of the prophets, and what came of it, *chap. i. 1, 5, 6* and now here again, for others' harms should be our warnings. God's judgments upon Israel of old for their sins were written for admonition to us Christians, *1 Cor. x. 11.* and the same use we should make of the like providences in our own day.

1. This prophet here repeats the heads of the sermons, which the former prophets preached to their fathers, *ver. 9, 10.* because the very same things were required of them now. Thus doth the Lord of hosts speak to you now, and thus did he speak to your fathers, saying, *Execute true judgment.* The duties here required of them, which would have been the lengthening of the tranquillity of their fathers, and must be the restoring of their tranquillity are not keeping fasts and offering sacrifices, but *doing justly*, and *loving mercy*; duties which they were bound to by the light and law of nature, though there had been no prophets sent to insist upon them: duties which had a direct tendency to the public welfare and peace, and which they themselves would be the gainers by, and not God. (1.) Magistrates must administer justice impartially, according to the maxims of the law, and the merits of the cause, without respect of persons. *Judge judgment of truth, and execute it when you have judged it.* (2.) Neighbours must have a tender concern for one another, and must not only do one another no wrong, but must be ready to do all the good offices that lie in their power to one another. They must shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother, as the case called for it. The iniquities of others, as well as their calamities, are to be looked upon with compassion. *Hunc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.* (3.) They must not bear hard upon those that they have advantage against, and that they know are not able to help themselves: They must not either in commerce, or in course of law oppress the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, and the poor, *ver. 10.* The weakest must not therefore be thrust to the wall, because they are weakest. No thanks to men not to deny right to those that are in a capacity to demand it, and recover it, but we must not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake, give those their own who have not power to force it from us. Or it intimates, that that which is but exactness with others is exaction upon the widows and the fatherless: nay, that not relieving and helping them as we ought, is in effect oppressing them. (4.) They must not only not do wrong to any, but they must not so much as desire it, or think of it; let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. Do not project it, do not wish it, nay, do not so much as please yourself with the fancy of it. The law of God lays a restraint upon the heart, and forbids the entertaining, forbids the admitting of a malicious, spiteful, ill-natured thought, *Deut. xv. 9.* *Beware that there be not a thought in thy Belial heart against thy brother.*

2. He describes the wilfulness and disobedience of their fathers, who persisted in all manner of wickedness and injustice, notwithstanding these exhortations and admonitions frequently given them in God's name, various expressions to this purpose are here heaped up, *ver. 11, 12.* setting forth the stubbornness of that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not in subjection to the law of God, neither indeed can be. They were obstinate and refractory, and persisted in their transgressions of the law purely from a spirit of contradiction to the law. (1.) They would not, if they could help it, come within hearing of the prophets, but kept at a distance; or if they could not avoid hearing what they said, yet they resolved they would not heed it; they refused to hearken, and looked another way, as if they had not been spoken to. (2.) If they did hear what was said to them, and as it seemed, inclined at first to comply with it, yet they flew off when it came to their setting to, and like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke they pulled away the shoulder, and would not submit to the easy yoke and light burden of God's commandments. They gave a withdrawing shoulder, so the word is, they seemed to lay their shoulder to the work, but they presently withdrew it again, as those, *Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11.* They were like a deceitful bow, as that son that said, *I go, Sir, but went not.* (3.) They filled their own minds with prejudices against the word of God; and had some objection or other ready wherewith to fortify themselves against every sermon they heard. They stopped their ears that they should not hear, as the deaf adder, *Psal. lviii. 4.* And none so deaf as those that will not hear, that make their own ear heavy, as the word is. (4.) They resolved that nothing that was said to them, for the enforcing of these injunctions should make any impression upon them; they made their hearts as an adamant-stone or as a diamond, the hardest of stones to be wrought upon; or as a flint, which the mason cannot hew into shape, as he can other stone out of the quarry. Nothing so hard, so unmanageable, so inflexible, as the heart of a presumptuous sinner; and they whose hearts are hard may thank themselves, they are of their own hardening; and it is just with God to give them over to a reprobate sense, to the hardness and impenitence of their own hearts.



hearts. These stubborn sinners hardened their hearts on purpose, *lest they should hear what God said to them by the written word, by the law of Moses and by the words of the prophets that preached to them; they had Moses and the prophets; but resolved they would hear neither, nor would they have been persuaded though one had been sent to them from the dead.* The words of the prophets were not regarded by them, though they were words which the Lord of hosts sent, and directed to them, though he sent them immediately by his Spirit in the prophets; so that in despising them they affronted God himself, and resisted the Holy Ghost. Note, The reason why men are not good is because they will not be so, they will not consider, they will not comply, and therefore if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

3. He shews the fatal consequences of it to their fathers. *Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of hosts; God was highly displeased with them, and justly; he required nothing of them but what was reasonable in itself, and beneficial to them, and yet they refused, and in a most insolent manner too: what master could bear to be so abused by his own servant? Such an implacable enmity to the gospel, as this here to the law and the prophets, was that which brought wrath to the uttermost upon the last generation of the Jewish church, 1 Thess. ii. 16. Great sins against the Lord of hosts, whose authority is incontestable, bring great wrath from the Lord of hosts, whose power is irresistible. And the effect was, (1.) As they had turned a deaf ear to God's word, so God turned a deaf ear to their prayers, ver. 13. As he cried to them in their prosperity to leave their sins and they would not hear, but persisted in their iniquities; so they cried to him in the day of their trouble to remove his judgments, and he would not hear, but lengthened out their calamities. They that set God at defiance in the height of their pride, yet when pains came upon them cried unto him; Lord in trouble have they visited thee; but God hath said it, and will abide by it, He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination, Prov. xviii. 9.—1. 24. Iniquity regarded in the heart will certainly spoil the success of prayer, Psal. lvi. 18. (2.) As they flew off from their duty and allegiance to God, and were of desultory and unsettled spirits, so God dissipated them, and threw them about as chaff before a whirlwind; he scattered them among all the nations whom they knew not, and whom therefore they could not expect to receive any kindness from, ver. 14. (3.) As they violated all the laws of their land, so God took away all the glories of it, *thir land was desolate after them, and no man passed through or returned.* All that country that was the kingdom of the two tribes, after the dispersion of the remaining Jews upon the slaughter of Gedaliah, was left utterly uninhabited, there was not man, woman or child in it, till the Jews returned at the end of seventy years captivity; nay, it should seem the very roads that lay through the country were deserted; none passed or repassed; which as it has an intimation of mercy in it, though they were cast out of it, yet it was kept empty for their return; so for the present it made the judgment appear much the more dismal; for what a horrid wilderness must a land be that had been so many years uninhabited? And they might thank themselves, it was they that had by their own wickedness laid the pleasant land desolate. It was, not so much the Chaldeans that did it, no, they did it themselves, the desolations of a land are owing to the wickedness of its inhabitants. Psal. cvii. 34. This came of their wilful disobedience to the law of God. And the present generation saw how desolate sin had made that pleasant land, and yet would not take warning.*

## C H A P. VIII.

The work of ministers is rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give every one their portion. So the prophet is here instructed to do, in the further answers he gives to the case of conscience proposed about continuing the public fasts. His answer in the foregoing chapter is by way of reproof to those that were disobedient, and would not obey the truth; but here he is ordered to charge his voice, and to speak by way of encouragement to the willing and obedient. Two words here are from the Lord of hosts, and they are both good words and comfortable words. In the first of these messages, ver. 1. God promiseth that Jerusalem shall be restored, reformed, replenished, ver. 2—8. That the country shall be rich, and the affairs of the nation shall be successful, their reputation revived, and their state in all respects the reverse of what it had been for many years past, ver. 9—15. And then exhorts them to reform what was amiss among them, that they might be ready for these favours designed them, ver. 16, 17. In the latter of these messages, ver. 18. he promiseth that their fasts should be superseeded by the return of mercy, ver. 19. And that thereupon they should be replenished, enriched and strengthened by the accession of foreigners to them, ver. 20—23.

1. **A** GAIN the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and was jealous for her with great fury. 3. Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain. 4. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. 5. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. 6. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. 7. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold I will save my people from the east-country, and from the west country; 8. And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

The prophet in his foregoing discourses had left his hearers under a high charge of guilt and deep sense of wrath; had left them in a melancholy view of the desolations of their pleasant land, which was the effect of their fathers' disobedience; but because he designed to bring them to repentance, not to drive them to despair, he here sets before them the great things God had in store for them, encouraging them hereby to hope that their case of conscience should shortly determine itself, and God's providence should as loudly call them to joy and gladness, as ever it called them to fasting and mourning.

1. It is here promised that God will appear for Jerusalem, and will espouse and plead her cause. (1.) He will be revenged on Zion's enemies, ver. 2. *I was jealous for Zion, or of Zion, i. e. I have of late been so heartily concerned for her honour and interest, with great jealousy.* The great wrath that was against her, chap. vii. 12. now turned against her adversaries. I am now jealous for her with great fury, and can no more bear to have her abused in her afflictions, than I could bear to be abused by her provocations. This he had said before, chap. vi. 14, 15. that they might promise themselves as much from the power of his anger when it was turned from them, as they had felt from it when it was against them. The sins of Zion were her worst enemies, and had done her the most mischief, and therefore God in his jealousy for her honour and comfort, will take away her sins, and then whatever other enemies injured her, it was at their peril. (2.) He will be resident in Zion's palaces, ver. 3. *I am returned to Zion, after I had seemed so long to stand at a distance, and I will again dwell in the midst of Jerusalem as formerly.* This secures to them the tokens of his presence in his ordinances, and the instances of his favour in his providences.

2. That there shall be a wonderful reformation in Jerusalem, and religion in the power of it shall prevail and flourish there. Jerusalem that had dealt treacherously both with God and man, shall become so famous for fidelity and honesty, that it shall be called and known by the name of a city of truth, and the inhabitants of it children that will not lie. The faithful city had become a harlot, Isa. i. 21. but shall now become a faithful city again: faithful to the God of Israel, and to the worship of him only. This was fulfilled: for the Jews after the captivity, though there was much amiss among them, yet were never guilty of idolatry. Jerusalem shall be called the mountain of the Lord of hosts, owning him and owned by him, and therefore the holy mountain, cleared from idols and consecrated to God, and not as it had been, the mount of corruption, 2 Kings xxiii. 13. Note, The city of God ought to be a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts a holy mountain. Those that profess religion and relation to God, must study to adorn this profession by all instances of godliness and honesty.

3. That there shall be in Jerusalem a great increase of people, and all the marks and tokens of a profound tranquillity. When it is become a city of truth, and a mountain of holiness, it is then peaceable and prosperous and every thing in it looks bright and pleasant. (1.) You may look with pleasure upon the generation that is going off the stage, and see them fairly quitting it in the ordinary course of nature, and not driven off it by war, famine or pestilence, ver. 4. *In the streets of Jerusalem that had been filled with the bodies of the slain, or deserted and left desolate, shall now dwell old men and old women, that have not been cut off by untimely deaths, either through their own intemperance or God's vengeance, but have the even thread of their days spun out to a full length; they shall feel no discomper, but the decay of nature, and go to their grave in full age, as a stock of corn in his season.* They shall have every one his staff in his hand for very age to support him, as Jacob that worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff, Heb. xi. 21. Old age needs a support, should not be ashamed to use it, but should furnish itself with divine graces, which will be the strength of the heart, and a better support than a staff in the hand. Note, The hoary head, as it is a crown of glory to those that wear it, so it is to the place where they live. It is a graceful thing to a city, to see abundance of old people in it: it is a sign not only of the healthfulness of the air, but of the prevalence of virtue, and the suppression and banishment of those many vices which cut off the number of men's months in the midst. A sign, not only that the climate is temperate, but that the people are so. (2.) You may look with as much pleasure upon the generation that is rising up in their room, ver. 5. *The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets.* This intimates, (1.) That they shall be blessed with a multitude of children, their families shall increase and multiply, and replenish the city, which was an early product of the divine blessing, Gen. i. 28. Happy the man, happy the nation, whose quiver is full of these arrows! They shall have of both sexes, boys and girls, in whom their families shall afterwards be joined, and another generation raised up. (2.) That their children shall be healthful, and strong, and active; their boys and girls shall not lie sick in bed, or sit pining in the corner, but (which is a pleasant sight to parents) shall be hearty and cheerful, and play in the streets. It is their pleasant playing age, let us not gudge it them, much good may it do them, and no harm: evil days will come time enough, and years of which they will say they have no pleasure in them; in consideration of which, they are concerned not to spend all their time in play, but to remember their Creator. (3.) That they shall have great plenty, and meat enough for all the mouths. In time of famine, we find the children screaming as the wounded in the streets of the city, Lam. ii. 12, 13. If they are playing in the streets, it is a good sign they want for nothing. (4.) That they shall not be terrified with the alarms of war, but enjoy a perfect security: *There shall be no breaking in of invaders, no going out of defenders, no complaining in the streets, Psa. cxliv. 1.* for when there is playing in the streets, it is a sign there is little care or fear there. There was when the enemy hunted their steps so close, that they could not go in their streets, Lam. iv. 18. but now they shall play in the streets, and fear no evil. (5.) That they shall have love and peace among themselves. The boys and girls shall not be fighting in the streets, as sometimes in cities, that are divided into factions and parties, the children soon imbibe and express the mutual resentments of the parents; but they shall be innocently and lovingly playing in the streets; not devouring but diverting one another. (6.) That the sports and diversions used, shall be all harmless and inoffensive; the boys and girls shall have no other play, but what they are willing shall be seen in the streets, no play that seeks corners, no playing the fool, or playing the wanton, for it is the mountain of the Lord, the holy mountain, but honest and modest recreations, which they have no reason to be ashamed of. (7.) That childish youthful sports shall be confined to the age of childhood and youth. It is pleasant to see the boys and girls playing in the streets, but it is ill-timed to see men and women playing there, that should fill up their time with work and business. It is well enough for children to be sitting in the marketplace croaking questions, Mat. xi. 16, 17. but it is no way fit that men who are able to work in the vineyard should stand all the day idle there, Mat. xx. 3.

4. That the scattered Israelites shall be brought together again from all parts whither they were dispersed, ver. 7. *I will save my people from the east-country and from the west; will save them from being lost, or losing themselves in Babylon, or in Egypt, or in any other country whither they were driven; they shall neither be detained by the nations among whom they sojourn, nor incorporate with them; but I will save them, will separate them, and will bring them to their own land again, will by the prosperity of that invite them back, and at the same time incline them to return; and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, shall choose to dwell there because it is the holy city, though upon many other accounts it was more eligible to dwell in the country, and therefore we find, Nah. xi. 2. that the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.*

5. That God would renew his covenant with them, would be faithful to them, and make them so to him; *They shall be my people, and I will be their God.*



God. That is the foundation and crown of all these promises, and is inclusive of all happiness. They shall obey God's laws, and God will secure and advance all their interests. This contract shall be made, shall be new made in truth and in righteousness. Some think the former speaks God's part of the covenant, he will be their God in truth, he will make good all his promises of favour to them; and the latter speaks man's part of the covenant, they shall be his people in righteousness; they shall be a righteous people, and shall abound in the fruits of righteousness, and shall not, as they have done, deal treacherously and unjustly with their God. See *Hos. ii. 16, 20*. God will never leave nor forsake them in a way of mercy, as he has promised them; and they shall never leave or forsake him in a way of duty, as they have promised him. These promises were fulfilled in the flourishing state of the Jewish church for some ages, betwixt the captivity and Christ's time; but were to have a further and fuller accomplishment in the gospel church, that heavenly Jerusalem which is from above, is free, and is the mother of us all; and fullest of all in the future state.

All these precious promises are here ratified, and the doubts of God's people silenced with that question, *ver. 6. If it be marvellous in the eyes of this people, should it be marvellous in mine eyes?* If it seem unlikely to you that ever Jerusalem should be thus repaired, should be thus re-edified, is it therefore impossible with God? The remnant of this people, (and God's people in this world are but a remnant) being few and feeble, thought all this was too good news to be true, especially in these days, these difficult days, these cloudy and dark days, considering how bad the times are, it is highly improbable, it is morally impossible they should ever come to be so good as the prophet speaks: how can these things be? How can dry bones live? But should it therefore appear so in the eyes of God? Note, We do both God and ourselves a deal of wrong, if we think, that when we are non-plussed, he is so; and that he cannot get over the difficulties which to us seem insurmountable. *With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible*; so far are God's thoughts and ways above ours.

9. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. 10. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour. 11. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts. 12. For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. 13. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. 14. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: 15. So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: Fear ye not. 16. ¶ These are the things that ye shall do; speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: 17. And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

God, by the prophet, here gives further assurances of the mercy he had in store for Judah and Jerusalem. Here is line upon line for their comfort, as before there was for their conviction. Mighty encouragements these verses contain, with reference to the difficulties they now laboured under. And we may observe,

1. Who they were to whom these encouragements did belong: to those who, in obedience to the call of God by his prophets, applied themselves in good earnest to the building of the temple, *ver. 9. Let your hands be strong* that are busy at work for God; *ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets*, and are not disobedient to them as *your fathers were* in the former days to the words of those prophets that were sent to them; you may take the comfort of the promises, and shall have the benefit of them who have obeyed the precepts given you *in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid*, when you were told that having begun with it, you must go on; *that the temple might be built*; God told you you must go on with it, and you have laboured hard at it for some time in obedience to the heavenly vision; now you are they whose hands must be strengthened, and whose hearts must be comforted with these precious promises; to you is the word of this consolation sent. Note, Those and those only, that are employed for God, may expect to be encouraged by him; who lay their hands to the plough of duty, shall have them strengthened with the promises of mercy; and those who mend of their fathers faults, not only cut off the entail of the curse, but have it turned into a blessing.

2. What the discouragements were which they had hitherto laboured under, *ver. 10*. These are mentioned as a foil to the blessings God was now about to bestow upon them, to make them appear the more strange, to the glory of God, and the more sweet, to their comfort. The truth was, the times had long been very bad, and the calamities and difficulties of them were many and great; (1.) *Trade was dead*, there was nothing to be done, and therefore nothing to be got. *Before these days of reformation began, there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beasts*; the fruits of the earth (though it had long lain fallow, and therefore one would think should be the more fertile) were thin and poor: so that the husbandman had no occasion to hire harvest people to reap his corn, or teams to carry it home, for it came next to nothing. Merchants had no goods to import or export, so that they needed not to hire either men or beasts; by which means the poor people that lived by their labour had no way of getting bread for themselves and their families. (2.) *Travelling was dangerous*; so that all

commerce both by sea and land was cut off, nay none durst stir abroad so much as to visit their friends, for *there was no peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction*; the Samaritans and Ammonites, and other their evil neighbours, made incursions upon them in small parties, and seized all they could lay their hands on; the roads were infested with highway-men, and both city and country with house-breakers, so that neither men's persons nor their goods were safe at home or abroad. (3.) *There was no such thing as friendship or good neighbourhood among them*; I set all men every one against his neighbour. In this there was a great deal of sin, for these wars and lightings came from men's lusts, and this God was not the author of; but there was in it a great deal of misery also, and so God was in it a just avenger of their disobedience to him; because they were of an evil spirit towards him, a spirit of contradiction to his laws, God sent among them an evil spirit, to make them vexatious one to another; those that throw off the love of God, forfeit the comfort of brotherly love.

3. What encouragement they shall now have to proceed in the good work they are about, and to hope that it shall yet be well with them. *Thus and thus you have been harassed and afflicted, but now God will change his way towards you, ver. 11*. Now you return to your duty, God will comfort you according to the time that he has afflicted you; the ebbing tide shall flow again. (1.) God will not proceed in his controversy with them, *I will not be to them as in the former days*. Note, It is with us well or ill, according as God is to us, for every creature is dear to us which he makes it to be. And if we walk not contrary to God as in the former days, he will not walk contrary to us as in the former days; for it is only with the forehead that he will reprove. (2.) They shall have great plenty and abundance of all good things, *ver. 12. The food shall be plentiful, and yield a great increase, the vine shall give her fruit* which makes glad the heart, and the ground its products which strengthen the heart; they shall have all they can desire, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight. *The heavens shall give their dew*, without which the earth would not yield her increase; which is a constant intimation to us of the beneficence of the God of heaven to men on earth, and their dependence upon him. It is said of a sleeping rain, that it leaves no food, *Prov. xxviii. 3*, but here the gentle dew waters the earth, that it may give feed to the sower and bread to the eater. And thus God will cause the remnant of his people to possess all these things. They are but a remnant, a residue, very few, one would think scarce worth looking after, but now they are at work for God, he will take care they shall want nothing that is fit for them. This confirms what the prophet's colleague had said a little before, *Hos. ii. 16—19. From this day will I bless you*. Note, God's people that serve him faithfully have great possessions; all is yours, for you are Christ's. (3.) They shall recover their credit among their neighbours, *ver. 13. Ye were a curse among the heathen*. Every one cursed and condemned them, spoke ill of them, and wished ill to them, upon the account of the great disgrace that they were under; some think they were made a form of execration, so that a man would load his enemy with the heaviest curse, he would say, *God make thee like a Jew*! But now, *I will save you, and you shall be a blessing*. Your restoration shall be as much taken notice of to your honour, as ever your desolation and dispersion was to your reproach; you shall be applauded and admired as much as ever you were vilified and run down; shall be courted and cherished, as much as ever you were slighted and abandoned. Most men smile or frown upon their neighbours, according as providence smiles or frowns upon them; but those whom God plainly blest as his own, shows favour to, and puts honour upon, we ought also to respect and be kind to. The blessed of the Lord are the blessings of the land, and should be so accounted by us. This is here promised to the house both of Israel and Judah, for many of the ten tribes returned out of captivity with the two tribes, and shared with them in those blessings; and, it is probable, besides what came at first, many, very many looked to them afterwards, when they saw their affairs take this turn. (4.) God himself will determine to do them good, *ver. 14, 15*. All their comforts take rise from the thoughts of the love God had towards them, *Jer. xxix. 11*. Compare these promises with the former threatenings. (1.) When they provoked him to anger with their sins, he said he would punish them, and so he did; it was his declared purpose to bring destroying judgments upon them, and because they repented not of their rebellions against him, he repeated not of his threatenings against them, but let the sentence of the law take its course. Note, God's punishing of sinners is never a sudden and hasty resolve, but is always the product of thought, and there is a counsel in that part of the will of God. And if the sinner turn not, God will not turn. (2.) Now they pleased him with their services, he said he would do them good, and will he not be as true to his promises, as he was to his threatenings? no doubt he will, so again have I thought to do well to Jerusalem in these days, when you begin to hearken to the voice of God speaking to you by his prophets; and the thoughts also shall be performed.

4. The use they are to make of these encouragements.

1. Let them take the comfort which these promises give to them. *Fear ye not, ver. 15. Let your hands be strong, ver. 9. and both together, ver. 13. Fear not but let your hands be strong*. (1.) The difficulties they met with in their work must not drive them from it, or make them go on heavily in it, for the issue would be good and the reward great. Let this therefore animate them to proceed with vigour and cheerfulness. (2.) The dangers they were exposed to from their enemies must not terrify them; those that have God for them, engaged to do them good, need not fear what man can do against them.

2. Let them do the duty which those promises call for from them, *ver. 16, 17*. The very same duties which the former prophets pressed upon their fathers from the consideration of the wrath threatened, *chap. vii. 9, 10*, this prophet presses upon them for the consideration of the mercy promised. Leave it to God to perform for you what he has promised in his own way and time, but upon condition that you make confession of your duty. *These are the things then that ye shall do*; this is your part of the covenant; the articles which ye are to perform, fulfil and keep, that you may not put a bar in your own door, and stop the current of God's favours. (1.) You must never tell a lie but always speak as you think, and as the matter is, to the best of your knowledge. *Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour*, both in bargains and in common converse; dread every word that looks like a lie. This precept the apostle quotes, *Eph. iv. 25*, and backs it with this reason, *we are members one of another*. 2. Those that are intrusted with the administration of public justice must see to it, not only that none be wronged by it, but that those who are wronged be righted by it. *Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates*. Let the judges that sit in the gates in all their judicial proceedings have regard both to truth and to peace; let them take care both to do justice, and to accommodate differences, and to prevent vexatious suits. It must be a judgment of truth in order to peace, and making those friends that were at variance; and a judgment of peace, as far as is consistent with truth, and no further. (3.) No man must bear malice against his neighbour upon any account, this is the same with what we had, *chap. vii. 10*, we must not



only keep our hands from doing evil, but we must watch over our hearts, that they *imagine not any evil* against our neighbour, *Prov. iii. 29.* Injury and mischief must be crushed in the thought, in the embryo. (4.) Great reverence must be had of an oath, and conscience made of it, never take a false oath, nay, *love no false oath*; i. e. hate it, dread it, keep at a distance from it. Love not to impose oaths upon others, lest they swear falsely; love not that any should take a false oath for your benefit, and forswear themselves to do you a kindness. Here is a very good reason against all these corrupt and wicked practices annexed, *for all these are things that I hate, and therefore you must hate them, if you expect to have God your friend.* These things here forbidden are all of them found among the *seven things which the Lord hates*, *Prov. vi. 16-19.* Note, We must forbear sin, not only because God is angry at it, and therefore it is dangerous to us, but because he hates it, and therefore it ill becomes us, and is a very ungrateful thing.

18. ¶ And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, 19. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness: and cheerful feasts: therefore love the truth and peace. 20. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; *It shall yet come to pass* that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: 21. And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. 22. Yea many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. 23. Thus saith the LORD of hosts: In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

Here are two precious promises in these verses, for the further encouragement of these pious Jews, that were hearty in building the temple.

1. That a happy period should be put to their fasts, and there shall be no more occasion for them, but they shall be converted into thanksgiving days, *ver. 19.* This is a direct answer to the enquiry concerning their fast, *chap. vii. 3.* those of them that fasted in hypocrisy had their doom in the foregoing chapter, but those that in sincerity humbled themselves before God, and sought his face, have here a comfortable assurance given them of a large share in the happy times approaching. The *four yearly fasts* they had religiously observed, should be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and solemn feasts, and those cheerful ones. Note, Joyous times will come to the church after troublous times; if weeping endure for more than a night, and joy come not the next morning, yet the morning will come that will introduce it at length. And when God comes towards us in ways of mercy, we must meet him with joy and thankfulness; when God turns judgments into mercies, we must turn fasts into festivals, and thus walk after the Lord. And those who *fast in tears* with Zion, shall reap in joy with her; that submit to the restraints of her solemn fasts while they continue, shall share in the triumphs of her cheerful feasts, when they come, *Isa. lvi. 10.* The inference from this promise is, therefore love the truth and peace; i. e. be faithful and honest in all your dealings, and let it be a pleasure to you to be so, though thereby you cut yourselves short of those gains which you see others get dishonestly; and, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men, and be in your element when you are in charity. Let the truths of God rule in our heads and let the peace of God rule in our hearts.

2. That a great accession shall be made to the church, by the conversion of many foreigners, *ver. 20-23.* This was fulfilled but in part, when in the latter times of the Jewish church there were abundance of proselytes from all the countries about, and some that lay very remote who came yearly to worship at Jerusalem; which added very much both to the grandeur and wealth of that city, and contributed greatly to the making of it so considerable as it came to be before our Saviour's time, though now it was but just peeping out of its ruins. But it would be accomplished much more fully in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, and the incorporating of them with the believing Jews in one great body, under Christ the head; a mystery which is made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets, *Rom. xvi. 29.* and by this among the rest, which makes it strange that when it was accomplished, it was so great a surprise and stumbling-block to the Jews: Observe.

1. Who they are that shall be added to the church, *people and the inhabitants of many cities*, *ver. 20.* not only a few ignorant country people that may be easily imposed upon, or some idle people that have nothing else to do, but intelligent, inquisitive citizens; men of business and acquaintance with the world, shall embrace the gospel of Christ. *Yea many people and strong nations*, *ver. 22.* some of all languages, *ver. 23.* By this it appears that they are brought into the church not by human persuasion, for they are of different languages, not by external force, for they are strong nations, able to have kept their ground if they had been so attacked, but purely by the effectual working of divine truth and grace. Note, God has his remnant in all parts; and in the general assembly of the church of the first-born, some will be found out of all nations and kindreds, *Rev. vii. 9.*

2. How their accession to the church is described; they shall come to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts, *ver. 21.* and to shew that this is the main matter in which their conversion consists, it is repeated, *ver. 22.* they shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. No mention is made of their offering sacrifices, not only because these were not expected from the proselytes of the gate, but because when the Gentiles should be brought in, sacrifice and offering should be quite abolished. See who are to be accounted converts to God, and members of the church: and all that are converts to God are members of the church. (1.) They are such as seek the Lord of hosts, that enquire for God their maker, covet and court his favour, and are truly desirous to know his mind and will, and sincerely devoted to his honour and glory, *this is the generation of them that seek him.* (2.) They are such as pray before the Lord; that make a conscience, and make a business, of the duty of prayer; that dare not, that would not for all the world, live without it; that by prayer pay their homage to God, own their dependence upon him, maintain their communion with him, and fetch in mercy and grace from him. (3.) They are such as herein have an eye to the divine revelation and institution;

which is signified by their doing this in Jerusalem, the place which God had chosen, where his word was, where his temple was, that was a type of Christ and his mediation, which all faithful worshippers will have a believing regard to.

3. How unanimous they shall be in their accession to the church, and how zealous in exhorting one another to it, *ver. 21.* The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, as formerly when they went up from all parts of the country to worship at the yearly feasts, and they shall say, *Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, I will go also.* This intimates, (1.) That those who are brought into an acquaintance with Christ themselves, should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him; thus Andrew invited Peter to Christ, and Philip invited Nathanael. True grace hates monopolies. (2.) That those who are rightly sensible of their need of Christ and of the favour of God through him, will stir up themselves and others without delay to hasten to him; *Let us go speedily to pray*; it is for our lives and the lives of our souls that we are to petition, and therefore it concerns us to lose no time; in a matter of such moment delays are dangerous. (3.) That our communion with God is very much assisted and furthered by the communion of saints. It is pleasant going to the house of God in company, *Psal. lv. 14.* with the multitude, *Psal. xlii. 4.* and of good use to those that do so to excite one another to go speedily and lose no time, we should be glad when it is said to us, *Let us go*, *Psal. cxxii. 1.* As iron sharpens iron, so may good men sharpen the countenance and spirits one of another in that which is good. (4.) That those who stir up others to that which is good must take heed that they do not turn off or tire or draw back themselves; he that saith, *Let us go*, saith, *I will go also.* What good we put others upon doing, we must see to it what we do ourselves, else we shall be judged out of our own mouths. Not, do you go, and I will stay at home; but do you go, and I will go with you. A singular pattern (saith Mr. Pemble) of zealous charity that neither leaves others behind, nor turns others before it.

4. Upon what inducement they shall join themselves to the church, not for the church's sake, but for his sake who dwells in it, *ver. 23.* Ten men of different nations and languages shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, begging of him not to outgo them, but to take them along with him; this speaks the great honour they have for a Jew as one of the chosen people of God, and therefore well worthy their acquaintance; they cannot all come to take him by the hand, or embrace him in their arms, but are ambitious to take hold of the skirt of his robe, to touch the hem of his garment, saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.* The gospel was preached to the Jews first (for of that nation the apostles were) and by them it was carried to the Gentiles. St. Paul was a Jew whose skirt many took hold of, when they welcomed him as an angel of God, and begged him to take them along with him to Christ; Thus the Greeks took hold of Philip's skirt, saying, *Sir, we would see Jesus*, *John xii. 21.* Note, It is the privilege of the saints that they have God with them, have him among them; the knowledge and fear and worship of him; they have his favour and gracious presence, and this should invite us into communion with them; it is good being with those that have God with them, and those who join themselves to the Lord must join themselves to his disciples; we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people, cast in our lot among them, and be willing to take one lot with them.

## CHAP. IX.

At this chapter begins another sermon which is continued to the end of chap. xi. and it is called, The burden of the word of the Lord; for every word of God has weight in it to those that regard it; and will be a heavy weight upon those that do not, a dead weight. Here is (1.) A prophecy against the Jews' unrighteous neighbours, the Syrians, Tyrians, Philistines, and others, *ver. 1-6.* with an intimation of mercy to some of them in their conversion, *ver. 7.* a promise of mercy to God's people in their protection, *ver. 8.* (2.) A prophecy of their righteous king, the Messiah, and his coming, with a description of him, *ver. 9.* and of his kingdom, the nature and extent of it, *ver. 10.* (3.) An account of the obligation the Jews lay under to Christ for their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, *ver. 11, 12.* (4.) A prophecy of the victories and successes God would grant to the Jews over their enemies, as typical of our great deliverance by Christ, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* (5.) A promise of great plenty and joy and honour, which God had in reserve for his people, *ver. 16, 17.* which was written for their encouragement.

1. THE burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD. 2. And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise. 3. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. 4. Behold, the LORD will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire. 5. Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful; and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. 6. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. 7. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. 8. And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

After the precious promises we had in the foregoing chapter of favour to God's people, their persecutors that hated them come to be reckoned with; those particularly that bordered close upon them.

1. The Syrians had been ill neighbours to Israel, and God has a controversy with them. The word of the Lord shall be a burden in the land of Hadrach, of Syria; i. e. but it doth not appear why it was so called. That that kingdom is meant is plain, because Damascus, the metropolis of that kingdom



kingdom, is said to be the rest of this burden, i. e. the judgments here threatened shall *light* and *lie* upon that city, those are miserable upon whom the burden of the word of the Lord rests; upon whom the wrath of God abides, John iii. 36. for it is a weight that they can neither shake off nor bear up under; there are those whom God causes his fury to rest upon; whom the wrath of God makes its mark, it will be sure to hit; whom it makes rest, it will be sure to sink. And the reason of this burden's resting on Damascus is because the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, (or rather, even of all the tribes of Israel,) are towards the Lord, i. e. Because the people of God by faith and prayer look up to him for succour and relief, and depend upon him to take their part against their enemies. Note, It is a sign God is about to appear remarkably for his people, when he raiseth their believing expectations from him and dependence upon him; and when by his grace he turns them from idols to himself; *Ist. xvii. 7, 8 at that day shall a man look to his Maker*. It may be read thus, *for the Lord has an eye upon man and upon all the tribes of Israel*; i. e. He is King of nations as well as King of saints: governs the world as well as the church, and therefore will punish the sins of other people as well as those of his own people. God is Judge of all, and therefore all must give account of themselves to him. When St. Paul was converted at Damascus and preached there, and disputed with the Jews, then the word of the Lord might be said to rest there, and then the eyes of men, of other men besides the tribes of Israel, began to be towards the Lord; see *Acts ix. 22*. Hamatha a country which lay north of Damascus, and which we often read of, *shall border thereby*, ver. 2. it joins to Syria, and shall share in the burden of the word of the Lord, that rests upon Damascus. The Jews have a proverb, *Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour*, who is in danger of partaking in his sins and in his plagues: woe to the land of Hadrach, and woe to Hamatha that borders thereby.

2. Tyre and Sidon came next to be called to an account, here as in other prophecies, ver. 2, 3, 4. Observe here,

(1.) Tyre flourishing, thinking herself very safe, and ready to set God's judgments not only at a distance but at defiance, for (1.) She is *very wise*; it is spoken ironically, she thinks herself *very wise*; and able to out-wit even the wisdom of God; it is granted her king is a great politician, her statesmen are so, *Ezek. xxviii. 3*. But with all their wit and policy they shall not be able to evade the judgments of God when they come with commission, there is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord; nay it is his honour to take the wisdom in their own craftiness. (2.) She is *very strong*, and well fortified both by nature and art. *Tyres did build herself a strong-hold*, which she thought could never be brought down or got over. (3.) She is *very rich* and money is a defence, it is the sinews of war. *Eccles. vii. 12*. By her fast trade she hath heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the street, i. e. she has an abundance of it; heaps of silver as common as heaps of sand, *Job xxvii. 16*. Solomon made silver to be in Jerusalem as the stones of the streets, but Tyre went further, and made fine gold to be as the mire of the street. It were well if we could all learn so to look upon it, in comparison with the merchandise of wisdom and grace, and the gains thereof.

(2.) Tyre falling, after all; her wisdom and wealth and strength shall not be able to secure her, ver. 4. *The Lord will cast her out* of that strong hold wherein she has fortified herself, will make her poor, so some read it; there have been instances of those that have fallen from the height of plenty to the depth of poverty, and great riches have come to nothing. God will smite her power in the sea; her being surrounded by the water shall not secure her, but she shall be devoured with fire, and burnt down to the ground. Tyre being seated in the midst of the water, one would have thought was in danger to be some time or other overflowed or washed away by that, yet God chuseth to destroy it by the contrary element; sometimes he brings ruin upon his enemies by those means which they least suspect. Water enough was nigh at hand to have quenched the flames of Tyre, and yet by them she shall be devoured; for who can put out the fire which the breath of the Almighty blows up?

3. God next contends with the Philistines, with their great cities and great lords, that bordered southward upon Israel. (1.) They shall be alarmed and alighted by the word of the Lord lighting and resting upon Damascus; ver. 5. the disgraces of Israel had many a time been published in the streets of Ashkelon, and they had triumphed in them; but now Ashkelon shall see the ruin of her friends and allies, and shall fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron: concluding that their own turns comenext, now the cup of trembling goes round; what will become of their house when their neighbour's is on fire? They had looked upon Tyre and Sidon as a barrier to their country, but when those strong cities were ruined their expectations from them were assumed; as our expectation from all creatures will be in the issue.

(2.) They shall themselves be ruined and wasted. (1.) The government shall be dissolved, *The king shall perish from Gaza*, not only the present king shall be cut off, but there shall be no succession, no successor. (2.) The cities shall be dispeopled, *Ashkelon shall not be inhabited*, the rightful owners shall be expelled, either slain or carried into captivity. (3.) Foreigners shall take possession of their land, and become masters of all its wealth, ver. 6. *A bastard shall dwell in Ashdod*, a spurious brood of strangers shall enter upon the inheritances of the natives, which they have no more right to than a bastard has to the estates of the legitimate children. And thus God will cut off the pride of the Philistines, all that strength and wealth which they prided themselves in, and which was the ground of their confidence in themselves, and their contempt of the Israel of God. This prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines and of Damascus and Tyre was accomplished not long after this by Alexander the Great, who ravaged all these countries with his victorious army, took the cities, and planted colonies in them; which Quintus Curtius gives a particular account of in the history of his conquests. And some think he is meant by the bastard that shall dwell in Ashdod, for his mother Olympia owned him begotten in adultery, but pretended it was by Jupiter. The Jews afterwards got ground of the Philistines, Syrians, and others their neighbours, took some of their cities from them and possessed their countries, as appears by the histories of Josephus and the Maccabees, and this was foretold before, *Zeph. ii. 4. &c. Obad. ver. 20*.

(3.) Some among them shall be converted, and brought home to God, by his gospel and grace; so some understand, ver. 7. as a promise, (1.) That God would take away the sins of these nations; *their blood and their abominations*, their cruelties and their idolatries, God will part between them and the sins which they have rolled under their tongue as a sweet morsel, and are as loath to part with as men are to part with the meat out of their mouths; and which they held fast between their teeth. Nothing is too hard for the grace of God to do. (2.) That he would accept of a remnant of them for his own. *He that remaineth shall be for our God*, God would preserve a remnant even of these nations that should be the monuments of his mercy and grace, and be set apart for him; and the disadvantages of their birth shall be no bar to their acceptance to God, but a Philistine shall be as acceptable to God, upon gospel-terms, as one of Judah, nay, as a governor or chief one in Judah, and a man of Ekron shall be as a Jebusite or a man of Jerusalem, as

a profelyted Jebusite, as Arunnah the Jebusite, 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. In Christ Jesus there is no distinction of nations, but all are one in him, all alike welcome to him.

4. In all this God intends mercy for Israel, and it is in kindness to them that God will deal thus with the neighbour nations, to avenge their quarrel for what is passed, and to secure them for the future. Thus some understand the seventh verse, as intimating, (1.) That thus God would deliver his people from their bloody adversaries that hated them, and to whom they were an abomination, then when they were just ready to devour them, and make a prey of them, I will take away his blood, i. e. the blood of Israel out of the mouth of the Philistines, and from between their teeth, Amos iii. 12, when in their hatred of them and enmity to them, they were greedily devouring them. (2.) That he would thus give them victory and dominion over them, and he that remaineth, i. e. the remnant of Israel, shall be for our God, shall be taken into his favour, shall own him, and be owned by him, and he shall be as a governor in Judah; though the Jews have been long in servitude, they shall recover their ancient dignity, and be victorious as David and other governors in Judah formerly were; and Ekron, i. e. the Philistines, shall be as the Jebusites, and the rest of the devoted nations were, brought into subjection under them.

However this is plainly the sense of ver. 8. that God will take his people under his special protection, and therefore will weaken their neighbours, that it may not be in their power to do them a mischief. I will encamp about my house because of the army. Note, God's house lies in the midst of an enemy's country, and his church is as a lily among thorns; and therefore God's power and goodness are to be observed in the special preservation of it. The camp of the saints being a little flock in comparison with the numerous armies of the powers of darkness that are set against it round about, would certainly be swallowed up, if the angels of God did not encamp about it, as they did about Elisha, to deliver it, Rev. xx. 9. *Psal. xxxiv. 7*. when the times are more than ordinarily perilous, when armies are marching and counter-marching, and all bearing ill-will to Zion, then providence will as it were double its guards upon the church of God, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth, that whether he return a conqueror or conquered he may do it no harm. And as none that pass by shall hurt them, so no oppressor shall pass through them any more; they shall have no enemy within themselves to rule them with rigour, and to make their lives bitter to them with sure bondage, as of old in Egypt. This was fulfilled, when, for some time after the struggles of the Maccabees Judea was a free and flourishing state: or perhaps when Alexander the Great, struck with an awe of Jaddus the high-priest, favoured the Jews and took them under his protection, at the same time when he valled the neighbouring countries. And the reason given for all this, for now have I seen with mine eyes, now have I carefully distinguished between my people and other people, with whom before they seemed to have had their lot in common, and have made it to appear that I know them that are mine. This agrees with *Psal. xxxiv. 15*. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, now his eyes which run to and fro through the earth shall fix upon them, that he may shew himself tender of them, and strong on their behalf, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass: 10. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. 11. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water.

That here begins a prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom, is plain from the literal accomplishment of the ninth verse in, and its express application to, Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem, Matt. xxi. 5. John xii. 15.

1. Here is notice given of the approach of the Messiah promised, as matter of great joy to the Old Testament church; behold, thy King cometh unto thee. Christ is a king; invested with regal powers and prerogatives; a sovereign prince, an absolute monarch; having all power both in heaven and on earth. He is Zion's king; God hath set him upon his holy hill of Zion, *Psal. ii. 7*. In Zion his glory as a king shines; thence his laws went forth, even the word of the Lord; in the gospel church his spiritual kingdom is administered; it is by him that the ordinances of the church are instituted, and its officers commissioned; and it is taken under his protection, he fights the church's battles, and secures its interests as its king. This king has been long in coming, but now behold, he cometh; he is at the door, there are but a few ages more to run out, and he that shall come will come; he cometh unto thee; the Word will shortly be made flesh, and dwell within thy borders; he will come to his own. And therefore rejoice, rejoice greatly, and shout for joy, look upon it as good news, and be assured it is true; please thyself to think that he is coming, that he is on his way towards thee; and be ready to go forth to meet him with acclamations of joy; as one not able to conceal it, it is so great, nor ashamed to own it, it is so just, cry hosanna to him; Christ's approaches ought to be the church's applauses.

2. Here is such a description of him as renders him very amiable in the eyes of all his loving subjects, and his coming to them very acceptable. (1.) He is a righteous ruler, all his acts of government will be exactly according to the rules of equity, for he is just. (2.) He is a powerful protector to all those that bear faith and true allegiance to him, for he hath salvation, he hath it in his power, he hath it to bestow upon all his subjects; he is the God of salvation; treasures of salvation are in him. He is servatus, saving himself, so some read it; rising out of the grave by his own power, and so qualifying himself to be our Saviour. (3.) He is a meek, humble, tender father to all his subjects as his children; he is lowly; he is poor and afflicted for the word signifies; so it notes the meanness of his condition, having emptied himself, he was despised and rejected of men. But the evangelist translates it so as to speak the temper of his spirit, he is meek, not taking state upon him or resenting injuries, but humbling himself from first to last; condescending to the mean, compassionate to the miserable; this was a bright and excellent character of him as a prophet, *Matt. xi. 29*. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and no less so as a king. It was a proof of this, that when he made his public entry into his own city (and it was the only passage of his life that had any thing in it magnificent in the eye of the world) he chose to ride not upon a stately horse, or in a chariot, as great men used to ride, but upon an ass, a beast of service indeed, but a poor silly and contemptible one, low and slow, and in those days ridden only by the meaner sort of people; nor was it an ass fitted for use, but an



*ass's colt*, a little foolish unmanageable thing, that would be more likely to disgrace his rider than be any credit to him, and that not *his own* neither; nor helped off, as sometimes a sorry horse is by good furniture, for he had no saddle, no housings, no trappings, no equipage. but his disciples clothes thrown upon the colt; for he *made himself of no reputation* when he visited us in great humility.

3. His kingdom is here set forth in the glory of it; this king has, and will have a kingdom, not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom, a *kingdom of heaven*. (1.) It shall not be set up and advanced by external force, by an arm of flesh or weapons of warfare that are carnal, no, he *will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horses from Jerusalem*, ver. 10. for he shall have no occasion for them while he himself *rides upon an ass*. He will in kindness to his people cut off their horses and chariots, that they may not cut themselves off from God by putting that confidence in them, which they should put in the power of God only; he will himself undertake their protection, will himself be a *wall of fire about Jerusalem*, and give his angels charge concerning it, those *chariots of fire and horses of fire*, and then the chariots and horses they had in their service shall be discarded and cut off as altogether needless. (2.) It shall be propagated and established by the preaching of the gospel, the *speaking of peace to the heathen*; for Christ came and preached peace to them that were *afar off*, and to them that were *nigh*; and so established his kingdom, by proclaiming *on earth peace, and good will towards men*. (3.) His kingdom, as far as it prevails in the minds of men, and has the ascendant over them, will make them peaceable and slay all enmities: it will cut off the battle-bow, and *beat swords into plough-shares*; it will not only command the peace, but will *create the fruit of the lips, peace*. (4.) It shall extend itself to all parts of the world in defiance of the opposition given to it. The *chariot and horse* that came against Ephraim and Jerusalem to oppose the progress of Zion's king shall be cut off, his gospel shall be preached to the world, and be received among the heathen, so that *his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth*, as was foretold by David, *Psal. lxxii. 8*. The preachers of the gospel shall carry it from one country, one island to another, till some of the remotest corners of the world are enlightened and reduced by it.

4. Here is an account of the great benefit procured for mankind by the Messiah, which is redemption from extreme misery, typified by the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, *Jer. 11*. *As for thee also, thee, O daughter of Jerusalem; or thee, O Messiah the prince, by the blood of thy covenant, i. e. by force and virtue of the covenant made with Abraham, sealed with the blood of circumcision, and the covenant made with Israel at mount Sinai, sealed with the blood of sacrifices, in pursuance and performance of that covenant I have now of late sent forth thy prisoners, thy captives out of Babylon, which was to them a most uncomfortable place, as a pit in which was no water*. It was part of the covenant, that if in the land of their captivity they sought the Lord, he would be found of them, *Lev. xxvi. 42-44, 45. Deut. xxx. 4*. It was *by the blood of that covenant* typifying the blood of Christ, in whom all God's covenants with man are yea and amen, that they were released out of captivity, and this was but a shadow of the great salvation wrought out by *thy king, O daughter of Zion*. Note, A sinful state is a state of bondage; it is a spiritual prison; it is a *pit* or a dungeon in which there is no water, no comfort at all to be had, we are all by nature prisoners in this pit; the *scripture has concluded us all under sin*, and bound us over to the justice of God. God is pleased to deal upon new terms with these prisoners, to enter into another covenant with them; the blood of Christ is the blood of that covenant, purchased it for us, and all the benefits of it; by that blood of the covenant effectual provision is made for the sending forth of these prisoners upon easy and honourable terms, and proclamation made of liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, like Cyrus's proclamation to the Jews in Babylon, which all those whose spirits God stirreth up will come and take the benefit of.

12. ¶ Turn ye to the strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope, even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee: 13. When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man: 14. And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the LORD GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. 15. The LORD of hosts shall defend them, and they shall devour and subdue with sling-stones, and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine, and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. 16. And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people, for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. 17. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

The prophet having taught those that were returned out of captivity to attribute their deliverance to the *blood of the covenant*, and to the promise of the Messiah, for therefore they were so wonderfully helped because that blessing was in them, was yet in the womb of their nation, now comes to encourage them with the prospect of a joyful and happy settlement, and of glorious times before them; and such a happiness they did enjoy in a great measure for some time, but these promises have their full accomplishment in the spiritual blessings of the gospel which we enjoy by Jesus Christ.

1. They are invited to look unto Christ and fly unto him as their city of refuge, *Jer. 12*. *Turn ye to the strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope*. The Jews that were returned out of captivity into their own land were yet in effect but prisoners, we are servants this day, *Neh. ix. 36*. yet *prisoners of hope or expectation*, for God had given them a *little reviving in their bondage*, *Ezra ix. 8, 9*. Those that yet continued in Babylon, detained by their affairs there, yet lived in hope some time or other to see their own land again; now both these are directed to turn their eyes upon the Messiah, set before them in the promise as their *strong-hold*, to shelter themselves in him, and flay themselves upon him, for the *perfecting* of the mercy which by his grace and for his sake was so gloriously begun, *look unto him and be ye saved, Isa. xlv. 22*. The promise of the Messiah was the *strong-hold* of the faithful long before his coming; they saw his day at a distance and were glad, and the believing expectation of this *redemption in Jerusalem* was long the

support and consolation of Israel, *Luke ii. 25-38*. They in their dangers and distresses were ready to turn towards this and the other creature for relief, but the prophets directed them still to *turn to Christ*, and to comfort themselves with the joy of their king coming to them with *salvation*. But as their deliverance was typical of our redemption by Christ, *ver. 11*. to this invitation to the strong hold speaks the language of the gospel call. Sinners are *prisoners*, but they are *prisoners of hope*; their case is *bad*, but it is not *desperate*; yet now there is *hope in Israel* concerning them, Christ is a *strong-hold* for them, a strong tower in whom they may be safe and quiet from the fear of the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the assaults of their spiritual enemies, to him they must *turn* by a lively faith, to him they must fly and trust in his name.

2. They are assured of God's favour to them. *Even to-day do I declare*, when things are at the worst, and you think your case deplorable to the last degree, yet I solemnly promise that *I will render double unto thee*; to thee, O Jerusalem, to every one of your prisoners of hope, I will give you comforts double to the sorrow you have experienced; or, blessings double to what I ever bestowed upon your fathers, when their condition was at the best, the glory of your latter state as well as of your latter house shall be greater, shall be twice as great as that of your former. And so it was no otherwise but by the coming of the Messiah, the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom. These spiritual blessings in heavenly things were double to what they had ever enjoyed in their most prosperous state. As a pledge of this, in the fulness of time God here promiseth to the Jews victory, plenty and joy in their own land, which yet shall be but a type and shadow of more glorious victories, riches and joy in the kingdom of Christ.

1. They shall triumph over their enemies, the Jews after their return were surrounded with enemies on all sides, they were *as a speckled bird*, all the birds of the field were against them, their land lay between the two potent kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, branches of the Grecian monarchy, and what frequent dangers they should be in between them was foretold, *Dan. xi*. But it is here promised, that out of them all the Lord would deliver them, and this promise had its primary accomplishment in the times of the Maccabees, when the Jews made head against their enemies, kept their head above water, and after many struggles and difficulties came to be head over them. It is promised,

(1.) That they shall be instruments in God's hand for the defeating and baffling of their persecutors. *I have bent Judah for me*, as my bow of steel, that bow I have filled with Ephraim as my arrows, have driven it up to its full bent till the arrow be at the head, for some think that is signified by the phrase of *filling the bow*; the expressions here are very fine, and the figures lively. Judah had been taught the use of the bow; *2 Sam. i. 18*. and Ephraim had been famous for it, *Psal. lxxviii. 9*. But let them not think that they gain their successes by their own bow, for they themselves are no more but God's bow and his arrows; tools in his hands which he makes use of, and manageth as he pleaseth, which he holds as his bow, and directs to the mark as his arrows. The best and bravest of men are but what God makes them, and do no more service than he enables them to do. The preachers of the gospel were the bow in Christ's hand, with which he went forth, he went on *conquering and to conquer*, *Rev. vi. 2*. The following words explain this, *I have raised up and spirited thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece*. This was fulfilled when against Antiochus one of the kings of the Grecian monarchy, the people that knew their God were strong, and did exploits, *Dan. xi. 32*. And they in the hand of an almighty God were made *as the sword of a mighty man*, which none can stand before. Wicked men are said to be God's sword, *Psal. xvii. 13*. and sometimes good men are made so, for he employs both as he pleaseth.

(2.) That God will be captain and commander in chief over them in every expedition and engagement, *ver. 14*. *The Lord shall be seen over them*, he shall make it appear that he presides in their affairs, and that in all their motions they are under his conduct, as apparently, though not so sensibly, as he was seen over Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire, when he led them through the wilderness. (1.) Is their army to be raised or mustered and brought into the field? *the Lord shall blow the trumpet* to gather the forces together, to proclaim the war, to sound the alarm and to give directions which way to march, which way to move; for if God blow the trumpet it shall not give an uncertain sound or a feeble ineffectual one. (2.) Is the army taking the field and entering upon action? Whatever enterprise the campaign is opened with, God shall go forth at the head of their forces *with whirlwinds of the south*, which were of incredible swiftness and fierceness; and before these whirlwinds, thy sons, O Greece, shall be as chaff. (3.) Is the army actually engaged? God's arrows shall go forth as lightning, so strongly, so suddenly, so irresistibly: his *lightnings* shall go forth as arrows, see *Psal. xviii. 14*. He sent out his arrows and scattered them, i. e. he shot out his lightnings and discomfited them. This alludes to that which God had done for Israel of old when he brought them out of Egypt, and into Canaan, and had its accomplishment, partly in the wonderful successes which the Jews had against their neighbours that attacked them in the time of the Maccabees, by the special appearances of the divine providence for them; and perfectly in the glorious victory gained by the cross of Christ and the preaching of the cross over Satan and all the powers of darkness, whereby we are made *more than conquerors*. (4.) Are they in danger of being over-powered by the enemy? *The Lord of hosts shall defend them*, *ver. 15*. *The Lord their God shall save them*, *ver. 16*. so that their enemies shall not prevail over them, or prey upon them. God shall be unto them for defence, as well as offence, the *shield of their help* as well as the *sword of their excellency*; and this as the *Lord of hosts*, who has power to defend them, and as their God, who is engaged by promise to defend them, and by the propriety he has in them. He shall save them in that day, that critical, dangerous day, as the flock of his people, with the same care and tenderness that the shepherd protects his sheep with. Those are safe whom God saves. (5.) Did their enemies hope to swallow them up? It shall be turned upon them, and they shall devour their enemies, and shall subdue with sling-stones, for want of better weapons, those that came forth against them. The stones of the brook when God pleaseth shall do as great execution as the best train of artillery; for the stars in their courses shall fight on the same side. Goliath was subdued with a sling-stone. Having subdued, they shall devour, shall drink the blood of their enemies, as it were, and as conquerors use to do, they shall make a noise through wine. It is usual for conquerors with loud huzzas and acclamations to glory in their victories and proclaim them. We read of those that shout for mastery, and of the shout of a king among God's people. They shall be filled with blood and spoil, as the bowls and basins of the temple, or the corners of the altar were used to be filled with the blood of the sacrifices; for their enemies shall fall as victims to divine justice.

2. They shall triumph in their God. They shall take the comfort and give God the glory of their successes. So some read, *ver. 15*. *They shall eat*, i. e. they shall quietly enjoy what they have got; God will give them power to eat it, after they have subdued the sling-stones, i. e. their enemies that sling stones at them; and they shall drink and make a noise, a joyful noise



noise before the Lord their maker and protector, *as through wine*, as men use to be merry at a banquet of wine. *Being not drunk with wine, wherein is excess*, but filled with the Spirit, they shall speak to themselves and one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, as those that are drunk do with vain and foolish songs, Eph. v. 18, 19. And in the fulness of their joy they shall offer abundance of sacrifices to the honour of God, so that they shall fill both the bowls and the corners of the altar with the fat and blood of their sacrifices. And when they thus triumph in their successes, their joy shall terminate in God as their God, the God of their salvation. They shall triumph.

1. In the love he has for them, and the relation wherein they stand to him; and they are the flock of his people, and he is their shepherd, and that they are to him as the stones of a crown, which are very precious, and of great value, and which are kept under a strong guard; never was any king so pleased with the jewels of his crown, as God is and will be with his people that are near and dear unto him, and in whom he glories. They are a crown of glory and a royal diadem in his hand, Isa. lvii. 2, 3. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day, when I make up my jewels, Mal. iii. 17. And they shall be lifted up as an ensign upon his land, as the royal standard is displayed in token of triumph and joy: God's people are his glory, so he is pleased to make them, so he is pleased to reckon them. He sets them up as a banner upon his own land, waging war against those that hate him, to whom it is a flag of defiance, and a center of unity to all that love him, to all the children of God that are scattered abroad, who are invited to come and lift themselves under his banner, Isa. xi. 10-12.

2. In the provision he makes for them, ver. 15. This is the matter of their triumph, ver. 17. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! This is the substance, this the burden of the songs wherewith they shall make a noise before the Lord. We are here taught, (1.) To admire and praise the amiableness of God's being. How great is his beauty! All the perfections of God's nature conspire to make him infinitely lovely in the eyes of all that know him. They are to him as the stones of a crown, but what is he to them? Our business in the temple is to behold the beauty of the Lord, Psal. xxvii. 4. and how great is that beauty? How far doth it transcend all other beauties, particularly the beauty of his holiness. This may refer to the Messiah, to Zion's king that cometh, see that king in his beauty, Isa. xxxiii. 17. who is fairer than the children of men, the fairest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Though in the eye of the world he had no form or comeliness, in the eye of faith how great is his beauty! (2.) To admire and give thanks for the gifts of God's favour and grace; his bounty as well as his beauty, for how great is his goodness! How rich in mercy is he! How deep, how full are his springs! How various, how plenteous, how precious are his streams! What a great deal of good doth God do! How rich in mercy is he! Here is an instance of his goodness to his people, Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids, i. e. God will bless his people with an abundance of the fruits of the earth: whereas they had been afflicted with scarcity to that degree, that the young men and the maidens were ready to swoon and faint away for hunger and thirst, Lam. ii. 12-21.—iv. 7, 8.—v. 10. Now they shall have bread enough and to spare; not water only, but wine, new wine, which shall make the young people grow and be cheerful; and (which some have observed to be the effect of plenty and the cheapness of corn) the poor will be encouraged to marry and re-people the land, when they shall have wherewithal to maintain their families. Note, What good gifts God bestows upon us, we must serve him cheerfully with them, and must trace the streams up to the fountain, and when we are refreshed with corn and wine must say, How great is his goodness!

## CHAP. X.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the chapter before, to encourage the Jews that were returned, with hopes, that though they had been under divine rebukes for their negligence in re-building the temple, and were now surrounded with enemies and dangers; yet that God would do them good and make them prosperous at home and victorious abroad. Now, (1.) They are here directed to eye the great God in all events that were concerning them; and both in the evils they suffered, and the comforts they desired, to acknowledge his hand, ver. 1-4. (2.) They are encouraged to expect strength and success from him in all their struggles with the enemies of their church and state, and to hope that the issue would be glorious at last, ver. 5-12.

1. ASK ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. 2. For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd. 3. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle. 4. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.

Gracious things and glorious ones, very glorious, and very gracious, were promised to this poor afflicted people in the foregoing chapter; now here he intimates to them, that he will, for these things be enquired of by them, and that he expects they should acknowledge him in all their ways, and in all his ways towards them; him and not idols that were rivals with him for their respects.

1. He directs them to apply themselves to God by prayer for rain in the season thereof. He had promised in the close of the foregoing chapter that there should be great plenty of corn and wine, whereas for several years, by reason of unseasonable weather, there had been great scarcity of both: but the earth will not yield its fruits, unless the heavens water it, and therefore they must look up to God for the dew of heaven, in order to the fatness and fruitfulness of the earth. Ver. 1. Ask ye of the Lord rain. Do not pray to the clouds, or to the stars for rain, but to the Lord; for he that hears the heavens, when they hear the earth, Hos. ii. 21. Seasonable rain is a great mercy, which we must ask of God; rain the time of the latter rain, when there is most need of it, the former rain fell at the feed time in autumn; the latter fell in the spring, between March and May, which brought the corn to an ear and filled it. If either of these rains failed, it was very bad with that land; for from the end of May to September they never had any rain at all. Jerom who lived in Judea, saith he never

saw any rain there in June or July. They are directed to ask for it in the time when it used to come. Note, We must in our prayers dutifully attend the course of providence; ask for mercies in their proper time, and not expect that God should go out of his usual way and method for us. But since sometimes God denied rain in the usual time as a token of his displeasure, they must pray for it then, as a token of his favour, and they shall not pray in vain. Ask, and it shall be given you; so the Lord makes bright clouds, which, though they were without rain themselves, yet are prefaces of rain; lightning, (so the margin reads it) for he maketh lightning for the rain. He will give them showers of rain in great abundance, and to give to every one grass in the field; for God is universally good, and makes his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust.

2. He shews them the folly of making their addresses to idols, as their fathers had done. Ver. 2. The idols have spoken vanity; the Teraphim which they courted and consulted in their distress were so far from being able to command rain for them, that they could not so much as tell them when they should have rain. They pretended to promise them rain at such a time, but it did not come. The diviners, that were the prophets of those idols, have seen a lie; their visions were all a cheat and a sham, and they have told false dreams, such as the event did not answer, which proved that they were not from God. Thus they comforted in vain those that consulted the lying oracles; all the vanities of the heathen put together could not give rain, Jer. xiv. 22. Yet this was not the worst of it; they not only got nothing by the false gods, but they lost the favour of the true God: for therefore they went their way into captivity as a flock driven into the fold: and they were troubled with one vexation after another, as scattered sheep used to be, because there was no shepherd, no prince to rule them, no priest to intercede for them, none to take care of them, and keep them together. They that wandered after strange gods were made to wander into strange nations.

3. He shews them the hand of God in all the events that were concerning them, both those that made against them, and those that made for them, ver. 3. Let them consider, (1.) When every thing went cross, it was God that walked contrary to them, ver. 3. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds that should have fed the flock, but neglected it and starved it. I was displeased at the wicked magistrates and ministers, the idol shepherds; the captivity in Babylon was a token of God's anger against them; in it likewise he punished the goats, those of the flock that were filthy and mischievous, they were set on the left hand to go away into punishment. Though the body of the nation suffered in the captivity, yet it was only the goats and the shepherds that God was angry with, and that he punished; the same affliction to others came from the love of God, and was but a fatherly chastisement, which to them came from his wrath, and was a judicial punishment. (2.) When things began to change for the better it was God that gave them the happy turn. He has now visited his flock with favour to enquire after them, and provide what he finds proper for them, and he has made them as his goodly horse in the battle; has beautified them, taken care of them, managed and made use of them as a man doth the horse he rides on; has made them valuable in themselves, and formidable to those about them as his goodly horse. It is God that makes us what we are, and it is with us as he appoints.

4. He shews them that very creature is to them what God makes it to be, ver. 4. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail. (1.) All the power that was engaged against them was from God; out of him came all the combined force of their enemies, every oppressor together, (and the oppressors of Israel were not a few) did but what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done; nor could they have had such power against them, unless it had been given them from above. (2.) All the power likewise that was engaged for them was derived from him, and depended on him. Out of him came forth the corner stone of the building, the power of magistrates which keeps the several parts of the state together. Princes are often called the corners of the people, as 1 Sam. xiv. 38. Out of him came forth the nail that fixeth the state, the nail in the sure place, Isa. xxii. 23. The nail in his holy place, Ezra ix. 8. Out of him came forth the battle bow, the military power, and out of him every oppressor or exactor, that has the civil power in his hand; and therefore to God the fountain of power, we must always have an eye, and see every man's judgment proceeding from him.

5. ¶ And they shall be as mighty men which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. 6. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them. 7. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD. 8. I will hiss for them, and gather them: for I have redeemed them; and they shall increase as they have increased. 9. And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. 10. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them. 11. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away. 12. And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.

Here are divers precious promises made to the people of God, which look further than to the state of the Jews in the latter days of their church, and have certain reference to the spiritual Israel of God the gospel church, and all true believers.

1. They shall have God's favour and presence, and shall be owned and accepted of him. This is the foundation of all the rest, The Lord is with them, ver. 5. He espouses their cause, takes their part, is on their side, and



and if he be for them, who can be against them? Again, *ver. 6. I have mercy upon them.* All their dignity and joy is owing purely to God's mercy; and mercy as it supposeth misery, so it excludes merit. They had been cast off, the effect of which could not but be misery; they had been justly cast off, and therefore could pretend to merit nothing at God's hand but wrath and the curse, yet it is promised *they shall be as though I had not cast them off.* The transgressions of their fathers, for which they had been rejected, shall not only not be visited upon them, but they shall not be so much as remembered against them: God will be so perfectly reconciled to them, as if he had never contended with them, and the falling out of these lovers shall rather be the renewing than the weakening of love. They shall have such a full assurance of God's being reconciled to them; and upon that shall be so well reconciled to themselves, that they shall be as easy as if they had never been cast off; and their condition after the restoration of the divine favour shall be so very happy, that there shall not remain the least scar from the wounds which were given them by their being cast off. Such favour doth God shew to returning repenting sinners, that were by nature at a distance, and children of wrath; such fellowship are they admitted into, and such freedom doth he use with them, that they are as *though they had never been cast off.* (1.) The covenant they are admitted into is the same that ever it was. *I am the Lord their God,* according to the original contract, the covenant made with their fathers. (2.) The communion they are admitted into is the same that ever it was; *I will hear them.* They shall be as welcome as ever to speak to him, and as sure as ever to receive from him an answer of peace; for as he never did, so he never will say to Jacob's seed, *seek ye me in vain.*

2. They shall be victorious over their enemies that would draw them from either their duty to God, or their comfort in God. *Ver. 5. They shall be as mighty men,* that are both strong in body, and bold in spirit, men of vigour, men of valour, effective men: *They of Ephraim,* as well as they of Judah, shall be like a mighty man, *ver. 7. that dares go about a difficult enterprise,* and is able to go through with it. They shall as mighty men tread down their enemies in the battle, as the dirt, that is thrown out of the houses, is trodden with other dirt in the mire of the streets. And they shall therefore fight, because the Lord is with them. Some would argue, they shall therefore sit still and do nothing, because the Lord is with them, that can and will do all: No, God's precious presence with us to help us, must not supersede, but quicken and animate our endeavours to help ourselves; and we must therefore work out our salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that works in us both to will and to do. They shall fight with readiness and resolution, because if God be with them, they are sure to be conquerors, more than conquerors. For then the riders on horses shall be confounded. The cavalry of the enemies shall be routed and put into disorder by the infantry of the Jews. The preachers of the gospel of Christ went forth to war a good warfare, they charged bravely, because God was with them, and the riders on horses that opposed them were confounded, for God chose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty. But whence have they all this might? How came they to be so able, so active? It is in the Lord, and in the power of his might, that they are so, *ver. 6. I will strengthen the house of Judah,* and so *I will save the house of Joseph.* Note, God saves us by strengthening us, and works out our happiness by working in us to do our duty. And thus we are engaged to the utmost diligence in using the strength God gives us, and yet, when all is done, God must have the glory of all. God is our strength, and so becomes both our song and our salvation.

3. Those of them that are dispersed shall be gathered together into one body, *ver. 6. I will bring them again to place them; bring them from other lands to place them in their own land.* This was a token of their being perfectly restored to all their other ancient privileges, they shall be restored to the possession of their own land. This was fulfilled when the children of God that were scattered abroad were by faith in Christ incorporated in the gospel church, and Jews and Gentiles became one fold, *John x. 16.* In order to this, *ver. 8. I will hiss for them,* or rather whistle for them, as the shepherd with his pipe calls his sheep together that know his voice, and so *I will gather them.* The preaching of the gospel was as it were God's hissing for souls to come to Jesus Christ, his calling in his scattered sheep to the green pastures. *I will gather them, for I have redeemed them.* Note, Whom Christ has redeemed by his blood, God will gather by his grace, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings. This promise is enlarged upon, *ver. 10. I will bring her again also out of the land of Egypt.* Some think this was literally fulfilled when Ptolemæus Philadelphus king of Egypt sent an hundred and twenty thousand Jews out of his country into their own land, as was the promise of gathering them out of Assyria by Alexander the son of Antiochus Epiphanes. But it has its spiritual accomplishment in the gathering in of precious souls out of a bondage worse than that of Egypt or Assyria, and bringing of them into the glorious liberty of the children of God and their enjoyments, which areas the beautiful fruitful pastures, in the land of Gilead and Lebanon. All the land of promise is theirs, even Gilead the utmost border of it eastward, and Lebanon the utmost border northward. But how shall this be? How shall a people so dispersed be got together? How shall they that are set at such a distance from their own country be brought to it again? It is true, the difficulties seem insuperable; but they shall be got over as easily, as effectually, as those that lay in the way of their deliverance out of Egypt and their entrance into Canaan. *He shall pass through the sea of affliction,* as of old through the Red-sea, to the sore affliction of Pharaoh and his hosts; or to the fore affliction of the sea, the waves whereof he shall smite, so that it shall be driven back, as when the sea saw and fled, *Psal. cxiv. 3.* And all the deeps of the river, all the rivers, though never so deep, shall dry up, as Jordan did to make way for Israel's passage into that good land which God had given them. Doth the pride of Assyria stand in the way of their deliverance? He shall give check to it that sets bounds to the proud waves of the sea, and it shall be brought down. Doth the sceptre of Egypt oppose it? That shall depart away, so that it shall not be able to obstruct the gathering in of God's Israel, when his time is come for the doing of it; when the gospel church was to be gathered out of all nations by the preaching of the gospel, great opposition was given to it by the enraged combined powers of earth and hell. Insuperable difficulties seemed to be in the way of it: but by a divine power going along with the doctrine of Christ, it became mighty to the pulling down of strong holds, and the conversion and salvation of thousands. Then the sea fled, and Jordan was driven back at the presence of the Lord.

4. They shall greatly multiply, and the church, that new world, shall be replenished. *Ver. 8. They shall increase as they have increased formerly in Egypt,* and great additions shall be made to their numbers, as in the days of David and Solomon. When God gathers his redeemed ones to himself, they shall help to gather in others with them, and their motion homewards shall be like that of a snow-ball, *crefcit eundo,* the farther it goes the larger it grows by accretion. *I will gather them, and they shall increase.* Note, The church of Christ is a growing body, as long as it is in the present state of minority, till it comes to the measure of the stature of the ful-

ness of Christ. There are added to it daily such as shall be saved. (1.) It shall spread to distant places. It shall fill Canaan, even to the lands of Gilead and Lebanon, so that no more place, no more room, shall be found for it there, *ver. 10. In Judah only God had been known,* and his name great in Israel only. Here only he revealed his statutes and judgments, but in gospel times that place shall be quite too strait; the church's tent must be enlarged, and its cords lengthened; then *I will sow them among the people.* *ver. 9. Their scattering shall be like the scattering of seed in the ground,* not to bury it, but to increase it, that it may bring forth much fruit. The Jews are said to be dispersed into every nation under heaven, *Acts ii. 5.* and as it was their troubles that dispersed some of them, so perhaps others transplanted themselves in colonies, because the land of Israel was too strait for them; and many were natives of other nations, but profelyted to the Jewish religion; now these were sown among the people, *Hos. ii. 23.* And this contributed very much to the spreading of the gospel. The Jews that came from all parts to worship at Jerusalem, fetched thence the gospel light and fire to their own countries, as those, *Acts ii.* and the eunuch, *Acts viii.* And their own synagogues, in the several cities of the Gentiles, were the first receptacles of the apostles and their preaching wherever they came. Thus when God sowed them among the people, that they might not get hurt by the Gentiles, but do good to them, he took care that they should remember him, and make mention of his name in far countries; and by keeping up the knowledge of God among them, as he had revealed himself in the Old Testament, they would be the more ready to admit the knowledge of Christ, as he has revealed himself in the New Testament. (2.) It shall last to future ages. The church shall not be *res unus ætatis*, but a seed in it shall serve the Lord, *ver. 7. They shall live with their children, and turn again.* Converts to Christ shall have their children about them, whom they shall teach the knowledge of the Lord, and bring with them when they turn again to the holy land, and the way of holiness. It was said to those to whom the gospel was first preached, *The promise is to you and to your children,* *Acts ii. 39.* They shall be so sown among the people, as never to be extirpated: Christ's family upon earth shall never be extinct, nor his purchased possession lost for want of heirs.

5. God himself will be both their strength and their song. (1.) In him they shall be comforted, and shall have abundant satisfaction; *ver. 7. Their heart shall rejoice as through wine, for Christ's love, which is their joy, is better than wine.* They shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice. When we resolutely resist, and so overcome our spiritual enemies, then our hearts shall rejoice. But we ruin our own joy, if our resistance be feeble, and we yield to the temptations of Satan. Their heart shall rejoice, and then they shall be as a mighty man, for the joy of the Lord will be our strength. And with their graces, their joys shall be propagated. Their children shall see it and be glad, and their hearts also shall rejoice in the Lord. It is good to acquaint children betimes with the delights of religion, and to make the services of it as pleasant as may be to them; that, learning betimes to rejoice in the Lord, they may with purpose of heart cleave to him. (2.) By him they shall be carried on with vigour, and enlargement of heart in his service, *ver. 12. I will strengthen them in the Lord,* strengthen them for their walk and work, as well as for their warfare. It is the God of Israel that gives strength and power unto his people, that strengthens all their powers and faculties for spiritual performances, above what they are by nature, and against what they are by the corruption of nature. Now observe, (1.) How they are thus enabled and invigorated for their duty. *I the Lord will strengthen them in the Lord;* in the Messiah, who is Jehovah our strength, as well as Jehovah our righteousness. Strength is treasured up for us in Christ, and from him it is derived to us. It is through Christ strengthening us, that we can do all things, and without him we can do nothing. His strength is commanded him for this purpose, *Psal. lxxviii. 28.* (2.) What good use they shall make of this strength given unto them. They shall walk up and down in his name. If God strengthens us, we must bestir ourselves, must walk up and down in all the duties of the Christian life, must be active and busy in the work of God, must walk up and down as industrious men do, losing no time, and letting slip no opportunity. But still we must walk up and down in the name of Christ, must do all by warrant from him, and in dependence on him, with an eye to his word as our rule, and his glory as our end. To us to live must be Christ; and whatever we do in word or deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord Jesus; that we receive not the strengthening grace of God in vain. See *Psal. lxxx. 17, 18.*

## C H A P. XI.

God's prophet, that in the chapters before was an ambassador sent to promise peace, is here a herald sent to declare war. The Jewish nation shall recover its prosperity, and shall flourish for some time, and become considerable; it shall be very happy at length in the coming of the long expected Messiah, in the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his standard there. But when thereby the chosen remnant among them are effectually called in, and united to Christ, the body of the nation, persisting in unbelief, shall be utterly abandoned, and given up to ruin for rejecting Christ; and that is it that is foretold here in this chapter; the Jews rejecting Christ which was their measure, filling sin, and the wrath which for that sin came upon them to the uttermost. Here is, (1.) A prediction of the destruction itself that should come upon the Jewish nation, *ver. 1-3.* (2.) The putting of it into the hands of the Messiah. (1.) He is charged with the custody of that flock, *ver. 4-6.* (2.) He undertakes it, and bears rule in it, *ver. 7, 8.* (3.) Finding it perverse, he gives it up, *ver. 9.* Breaks his shepherd's staff, *ver. 10, 11.* Resents the indignities done him, and the contempt put upon him, *ver. 12, 13.* And then breaks his other staff, *ver. 14.* (4.) He turns them over into the hands of foolish shepherds, who, instead of preventing, shall complete their ruin, and both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch, *ver. 15-17.* This is foretold to the poor of the flock before it comes to pass, that when it doth come to pass, they may not be offended.

1. **O** PEN thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. 2. Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. 3. ¶ There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

In dark and figurative expressions, as is usual in the scripture predictions of things at a distance, that destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church



church and nation, is here foretold, which our Lord Jesus when the time was at hand prophesied of very plainly and expressly. We have here,

1. Preparation made for that destruction, *ver. 1. Open thy doors, O Lebanon.* Thou wouldst not open them to let thy king in, he came to his own, and his own received him not; now thou must open them to let thy ruin in. Let the gates of the forest and all the avenues to it be thrown open, and let the fire come in and devour its glory. Some by Lebanon here understand the temple, which was built of cedars from Lebanon, and the stones of it white as the snow of Lebanon. It was burnt with fire by the Romans, and its gates were forced open by the fury of the soldiers. To confirm this they tell a story, that forty years before the destruction of the second temple, the gates of it opened of their own accord; upon which prodigy, Rabbi Johanan made this remark (as it is found in one of the Jewish authors): Now I know, said he, that the destruction of the temple is at hand, according to the prophecy of Zechariah, *Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.* Others understand it of Jerusalem, or rather of the whole land of Canaan, to which Lebanon was an inlet on the north. All shall lie open to the invader; and the cedars, the mighty and eminent men, shall be devoured; which cannot but alarm those of an inferior rank, *ver. 2. If the cedars are fallen, i. e. if all the mighty are spoiled, and brought to ruin, let the fir-trees howl.* How can the slender fir-trees stand, if stately cedars fall? If cedars are devoured by fire, it is time for the fir-trees to howl; for no wood is combustible, as that of the fir. And let the oaks of Bashan, that lie exposed to every injury howl; for the forest of the vintage, or the flourishing vineyard, that used to be guarded with a particular care, is come down. Or, as some read it *when the defended forests, such as Lebanon was, are come down.* Note, The falls of the wife and good into sin, and the falls of the rich and great into trouble, are loud alarms to those that are every way their inferiors, not to be secure.

2. Lamentation made for the destruction, *ver. 3. There is a voice of howling.* Those that are fallen, howl for grief and shame, and those who see their own turn coming, howl for fear. But the great men, especially, receive the alarm with the utmost confusion. Those that were roaring in the day of their revels and triumphs, are howling in the day of their terrors; for now they are tormented more than others. Those great men were by office shepherds, and such should have protected God's flock committed to their charge: it is the duty both of princes and priests; but they were as young lions that made themselves a terror to the flock with their roaring, and the flock a prey to themselves with their tearing. Note, It is sad with a people, when those that should be as shepherds to them are as young lions to them. But what is the issue? The shepherds howl, for their glory is spoiled. Their pastures and the flocks that covered them, which were the glory of the swains, are laid waste. The young lions howl, for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. The pride of Jordan was the thickets on the banks, in which the lions reposed themselves: and therefore when the river overflowed and spoiled them, the lions came up from them, as we read, *Jer. xlv. 19.* and they came up roaring. Note, When those that have power proudly abuse their power, and, instead of being shepherds, are as young lions, they may expect that the righteous God will humble their pride and break their power.

4. Thus saith the LORD my God: Feed the flock of the slaughter; 5. Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not; 6. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. 7. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands: and I fed the flock. 8. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me. 9. Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. 10. ¶ And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. 11. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD. 12. And I said unto them, if ye think good, give me my price; and if not forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. 13. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD. 14. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

The prophet here is made a type of Christ, as the prophet Isaiah sometimes was; and the scope of these verses is to shew, that for judgment Christ came into this world, John ix. 39. for judgment to the Jewish church and nation, which were about the time of his coming wretchedly corrupted and degenerated by the worldliness and hypocrisy of their rulers. Christ would have healed them, but they would not be healed; they are therefore left desolate, and abandoned to ruin. Observe here,

1. The desperate case of the Jewish church, under the tyranny of their own governors. Their slavery in their own country made them as miserable as their captivity in strange countries had done. *Their possessors slay them, and sell them,* *ver. 5.* In Zechariah's time we find the rulers and the nobles justly rebuked for enabling usury of their brethren; and the governors even by their servants, oppressive of the people. *Neh. v. 7—15.* in Christ's time, the chief priests and the elders, that were the possessors of their flock, by their traditions, the commandments of men, and their impositions on the consciences of the people, became perfect tyrants, devoured their houses, engrossed their wealth, and sheared the flock instead of feeding it. The Sadducees, that were deists, corrupted their judgments. The Pharisees

that were bigots for superstition, corrupted their morals, by making void the commandments of God, *Mat. xv. 6.* Thus they flew the sheep of the flock, thus sold them. They mattered not what became of them, so they could but gain their own ends, and serve their own interests. And, (1.) In this they justified themselves. They say them and hold themselves not guilty. They think there is no harm in it, and that they shall never be called to an account for it by the chief shepherd; as if their power were given them for destruction, which was designed only for edification; and as if, because they sat in Moses's seat, they were not under the obligation of Moses's law; but might dispense with it, and with themselves in the breach of it, at their pleasure. Note, Those have their minds woefully blinded indeed, that do ill, and justify themselves in it: but God will not hold them guiltless who hold themselves so. (2.) In this they affronted God, by giving him thanks for the gain of their oppression. They said, *Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich.* As if because they prospered in their wickedness, got money by it, and raised estates, God had made himself patron of their unjust practices, and Providence was become *particeps criminis.* What is got honestly we ought to give God thanks for, and to bless him whose blessing makes rich, and adds no sorrow with it. But with what face can we go to God, either to beg a blessing upon the unlawful methods of getting wealth, or to return him thanks for success in them? They should rather have gone to God to confess the sin, to take shame to themselves for it and to vow restitution, than thus to mock him, by making the gains of sin the gift of God, who hates robbery for burnt-offerings; and reckons not himself praised by the thanksgiving, if he be dishonoured either in the getting or in the using of that which we give him thanks for. (3.) In this they put contempt upon the people of God, as unworthy their regard or compassionate consideration; *their own shepherds pity them not;* they make them miserable, and then do not commiserate them. Christ had compassion on the multitude because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as if they had no shepherd, as really they had worse than none; but their own shepherds pitied them not, nor shewed any concern for them. Note, It is ill for a church when its pastors have no tenderness, no compassion for precious souls, when they can look upon the ignorant, the foolish, the wicked, the weak, without pity.

2. The sentence of God's wrath passed upon them for their senselessness and stupidity in this condition. There was a general decay, nay, a destruction of religion among them; and it was all one to them, they regarded it not; *My people loved to have it so,* *Jer. v. 31.* Though they were oppressed and broken in judgment, yet they willingly walked after the commandment, *Ios. v. 11.* And as their shepherds pitied them not, so they did not bemoan themselves; therefore God saith, *ver. 7. I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land.* They have courted their own destruction, and so let their doom be. But those are truly miserable whom the God of mercy himself will no more have compassion upon. They that are willing to have their consciences oppressed by those that teach for doctrines the commandments of men, as the Jews were, who called them Rabbi, Rabbi, that did so, *Mat. xx. 9—xxiii. 7.* are often punished by oppression in their civil interests, and justly; for they forfeit their own rights, who tamely give up God's rights. The Jews did so, the Papists do so; and who can pity them if they be ruled with rigour? God here threatens them, (1.) That he will deliver them into the hand of oppressors, every one into his neighbour's hand, so that they shall use one another barbarously. The several powers in Jerusalem, did so; the zealous, the seditious, as they were called, committed greater outrages than the common enemy did: as Josephus relates in his history of the wars of the Jews. They shall be delivered every one into the hand of his king, i. e. the Roman emperor, whom they chose to submit to, rather than to Christ, saying, *We have no king but Caesar.* Thus they thought to ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters. But for this, God brought the Romans upon them, who took away their place and nation. (2.) That he will not deliver them out of their hands. *They shall smite the land, the whole land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them;* and if the Lord do not help them, none else can, nor can they help themselves.

3. A trial yet made whether their ruin might be prevented by sending Christ among them as a shepherd: God had sent his servants to them in vain, but last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, *they will reverence my Son,* *Mat. xxi. 37.* divers of the prophets had spoken of him as the shepherd of Israel, *Isa. xl. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 23.* He himself told the Pharisees that he was the shepherd of the sheep, and that they who pretended to be shepherds were thieves and robbers, *John x. 1, 2—11.* where he seems to refer to this here. Where we have, (1.) The charge he received from his Father to try what might be done with his flock, *ver. 4. Thus saith the Lord my God,* (Christ called his Father his God because he acted in compliance with his will, and with an eye to his glory in his whole undertaking) *feed the flock of the slaughter;* the Jews are God's flock, but they were the flock of the slaughter; for their enemies had killed them all the day long, and accounted them as sheep for the slaughter; their own possessors slew them, and God himself had doomed them for the slaughter: yet fed them, by reproof, instruction, and comfort; provide wholesome food for them who have so long been soured with the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees. Other sheep he had, which were not of this fold, and which afterwards must be brought: but he is first sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. *Mat. xv. 24.* (2.) His acceptance of this charge, and his undertaking pursuant to it, *ver. 7. he doth as it were say, Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God:* and since this is thy will, it is mine, *I will feed the flock of slaughter;* Christ will have a care for these lost sheep; he will go about among them, teaching and healing even you, O poor of the flock: Christ did not neglect the meanest, or overlook them for their meanness, the shepherds that made a prey of them regarded not the poor, they were conversant with those only that they could get by; but Christ preached his gospel to the poor, *Mat. xi.*

5. It was an instance of his humiliation that his converse was mostly with the inferior sort of people; his disciples, that were his constant attendants, were of the poor of the flock. (3.) His furnishing himself with tools proper for the charge he had undertaken: *I took unto me two staves,* pastoral staves; other shepherds have but one crook, but Christ had two, noting the double care he took of his flock, and what he did both for the souls and for the bodies of men. David speaks of God's rod and his staff, *Psal. xxiii. 4.* a correcting rod, and a supporting staff. One of these staves was called Beauty, nothing the temple, which is called the beauty of holiness, and one of its gates, beautiful; which Christ called his Father's house, and for which he shewed a great zeal when he cleared it of the buyers and sellers; the other he called Bands, noting their civil state and the incorporate society of that nation; which Christ also took care of by preaching love and peace among them: Christ in his gospel, and in all he did among them, consulted the advancement both of their civil and of their sacred interests. (4.) His execution of his office as their chief shepherd, he fed the flock, *ver. 7.* and he displaced those under-shepherds that were false to their trust, *ver. 8. Three shepherds I cut off in one month.* Through the deficiency and uncertainty of the history of the Jewish church in its latter ages we know not what particular event this had its accomplishment



in; in general, it seems to be an act of power and justice for the punishment of the *sinful shepherds*, and the redress of the grievances of the *abused flock*. Some understand it of the three orders of princes, priests, and scribes or prophets, who when Christ had finished his work were laid aside for their unfaithfulness. Others, of the three sects among the Jews, of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, all whom Christ silenced in dispute, *Matt. xxii.* and soon after *cut them off*, all in a little time.

4. Their enmity to Christ, and making themselves odious to him. He came to his own, the sheep of his own pasture; it might have been expected that between them and him there should have been an entire affection as between the shepherd and his sheep; but they carried themselves so ill that *his soul loathed them*, was *straitened* towards them, so it may be read; he intended them kindness, but could not do them the kindness he intended them, *because of their unbelief*, *Matt. xiii. 58.* He was disappointed in them, discouraged concerning them, *grieved* for them; not only for the shepherds he cut off, but for the people whom Christ often looked upon with grief in his heart and tears in his eyes. Their provocations even wore out his patience, and he was weary of that *faithless and perverse generation*. *Their soul also it abhorred me*, and therefore it was that his soul loathed them; for whatever estrangement there is between God and man, it begins on man's side. The Jewish shepherds rejected this chief shepherd, as the Jewish builders rejected this chief corner stone. They had indignation at Christ's doctrine and miracles, and his interest in the people; to whom they did all they could to make him odious, as they had made themselves odious to him. Note, There is a mutual enmity between God and wicked people; they are hateful to God and haters of God; nothing speaks more the sinfulness and misery of an ungenerate state than this doth; the carnal mind, the friendship of the world, are enmity to God, and God hateth all the workers of iniquity; and it is easy to foresee what this will end in, if the quarrel be not taken up in time. *Ista. xxvii. 4, 5.*

5. Christ's rejecting of them as incurable, and leaving them their house desolate, *Matt. xxiii. 38.* The things of their peace are now hid from their eyes, because they knew not the day of their visitation. Here we have,

1. The sentence of their rejection passed, *ver. 9.* Then said I, *I will not feed you*, I will take no further care of you, *you shall not see me again*; take your own course. As I will not feed you, I will not cure you; that *that dieth, let it die*; the shepherd will not do nothing to save its forfeited life; *that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off*; that that will make itself a prey to the wolf, let it be a prey; and let the rest so far forget their own mild and gentle nature, as to *eat the flesh of one another*; let those sheep fight like dogs. Those that reject Christ will be certainly and justly rejected by him, and then are miserable of course.

2. A sign of it given, *ver. 10.* I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, in token of this, that he would be no longer a shepherd to them; as the lord high steward determines his commission by breaking his white staff, and as Moses's breaking the tables of the law put a stop for the present to the treaty between God and Israel; the breaking of this staff signified the breaking of God's covenant which he had made with all the people the covenant of peculiarity made with all the tribes of *Israel*, and all other people that by being professed to their religion were incorporated into their nation. The Jewish church was now stripped of all its glory, its crown is profaned and cast to the ground, and all its honour laid in the dust; for God is departed from it; and will no more own it for his; when Christ told them plainly that the *kingdom of God* should be *taken from them* and *given to another people*, then he broke the staff of Beauty, *Matt. xxi. 43.* And it was broken in that day: though Jerusalem and the Jewish nation held up forty years longer, yet from that day we may reckon the staff of Beauty broken, *ver. 11.* And though the great men did not or would not understand it as a divine sentence, but thought to put it by with a cold *God forbid*, *Luke xx. 16.* yet the poor of the flock, the disciples of Christ, that waited on him, and understood with what authority he spoke, and could distinguish the voice of their shepherd from that of a stranger, they knew that it was the voice of the Lord, and trembled at it, and were confident that it should not fall to the ground. Note, Christ is waited on by the poor of the flock; he chose them to be with him, to be his pupils, to be his witnesses; the poor received him and his gospel when those that had great possessions turned their backs upon him. And those that wait upon Christ, that sit at his feet to hear and receive his words, they shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, *John vii. 17.*

3. A further reason given for their rejection. It was said before, their souls abhorred me; and here we have an instance of it, their buying and selling him for thirty pieces of silver; either thirty Roman pence, or rather thirty Jewish shekels; this is here foretold in somewhat obscure expressions; as it is fit such particular prophecies should be delivered, lest otherwise the plainness of the prophecy might prevent the accomplishment of it. Here, (1.) The shepherd comes to them for his wages, *ver. 12.* If ye think good, give me my price; you are weary of me, pay me off and discharge me; and if not, forbear; if you be willing to continue me longer in your service I will continue; or if to turn me off without wages I am content. Christ was no hireling, and yet the labourer is worthy of his hire. Compare with this what Christ said to Judas, when he was going to sell him, *what thou doest, do quickly*; be at a word with the chief priests, let them either take the bargain or leave it, *John xiii. 27.* Those that betray Christ are not forced to it, they might have chosen. (2.) They value him at thirty pieces of silver, many years service he had done them as a shepherd, yet this is all they will now turn him off with, a goodly price that I and all my care and pains was valued at by them. If Judas fixed this sum in his demand, it is observable that his name is Judah, the same name with that of the body of the people, for it was a national act; or if (as it rather seems) the chief priests pitched upon this sum in their proffers, they were the representatives of the people; it was part of the priest's office to put a value upon the devoted things, *Lev. xxvii. 8.* and thus they valued the Lord Jesus. It was the ordinary price of a slave, *Exod. xxi. 32.* Making light of Christ and undervaluing the love of that great and good shepherd is the ruin of multitudes, and justly so. (3.) The silver being no way proportionable to his worth, it is thrown to the potter with disdain; let him take it to buy clay with, or for any use that a little money will serve to; for it is not worth hoarding; it may be enough for a potter's stock, but not for the pay of such a shepherd, much less for his purchase. So the prophet cast the thirty pieces of silver to the potter in the house of the Lord; let him take them and do what he will with them. Now we find a particular accomplishment of this in the history of Christ's sufferings, and reference is had to this prophecy, *Matt. xxvii. 9, 10.* Thirty pieces of silver was the very sum for which Christ was sold to the chief priests; the money, when Judas would not keep it, and the chief priests would not take it back, was laid out in the purchase of the potter's field. Even that sudden resolve of the chief priests was an old thing to an ancient prophecy, and the more ancient counsel and foreknowledge of God.

4. The completing of their rejection in the cutting asunder of the other staff, *ver. 14.* The former sign the ruin of their church by breaking the covenant between God and them, that defaced their beauty; this speaks

the ruin of their state, by breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel, i. e. by reviving animosities and contention among them, such as were of old between Judah and Israel, the writing of whom as one stick in the hand of the Lord was one of the blessings promised after their return out of captivity, *Ezek. xxxvii. 19.* But that union shall now be dissolved, they shall be crumbled into parties and factions, exasperated one against another, and their kingdom being thus divided shall be brought to desolation. (1.) Nothing ruins a people so certainly, so inevitably as the breaking of the staff of Bands, and the weakening of the brotherhood among them; for hereby they become an easy prey to the common enemy. (2.) This follows upon the dissolving of the covenant between God and them, and the decay of religion among them; when iniquity abounds love waxeth cold. No wonder if those fall out among themselves that have provoked God to fall out with them. When the staff of Beauty is broke, the staff of Bands will not hold long. An unchurched people will soon be an undone people.

15. ¶ And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. 16. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. 17. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock: the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened,

God having shewed the misery of this people in their being justly abandoned by the good shepherd, here shews their further misery in being shamefully abused by foolish shepherds. The prophet is himself to personate and represent this pretended shepherd, *ver. 15.* Take unto thee the instruments or accoutrements of a foolish shepherd, that are no way fit for the business; such a shepherd's coat, and bag and staff as a foolish shepherd would appear in; for such a shepherd shall be set over them (*ver. 16.*) that instead of protecting them shall oppress them, and do them mischief. (1.) They shall be under the inspection of unfaithful ministers; their scribes, and priests, and doctors of their law shall bind heavy burdens upon them and grieveous to be borne; and with their traditions imposed, shall make the ceremonial law much more a yoke than God had made it. The description here given of the foolish shepherd suits very well with the character Christ gives of the Scribes and Pharisees, *Matt. xxiii.* (2.) They shall be under the tyranny of unmerciful princes that shall rule them with rigour, and make their own land as much a house of bondage to them as ever Egypt or Babylon were; when they had rejected him by whom princes decree justice, it was just they should be turned over to them who decree unrighteous decrees. (3.) They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false Christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, *Matt. xxiv. 5.* Many such there were who by their seditious practices provoked the Romans, and hastened the ruin of the Jewish nation; but it is observable they were never created by a counterfeit Messiah, till they had refused and rejected the true Messiah. Now, observe.

1. What a curse this foolish shepherd should be to the people, *ver. 17.* God will for their punishment raise up a foolish shepherd, who will not do the duty of a shepherd, he will not visit those that be cut off, nor go after those that go astray, or seek those that are missing, to find them out and bring them home, as the good shepherd doth, *Matt. xviii. 12, 13.* They take no care of the young ones, that need their care, and are well worthy of it, as Christ doth, *Ista. xl. 11.* They do not heal that which was broken, which was worried and torn, but let it die of its bruises, when a little thing in time would have saved it. They do not feed those that through weakness stand still, and are ready to faint and cannot get forward, but leave them behind, let who will take them up; they do not carry that which stand still; so some read, never do any thing to support the weak and comfort the feeble-minded: but on the contrary, (1.) They are luxurious themselves, they eat of the flesh of the fat, they will have of the best for themselves; and like that wicked servant that said, *My lord delays his coming*, they eat and drink with the drunken, and serve their own bellies. (2.) They are barbarous to the flock, their passions are as ill-governed as their appetites, for when they are in a rage against any of the flock, they tear their very claws in pieces by over driving them, they beat their hoofs; they smite their fellow servants; woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is such a child.

2. What a curse this foolish shepherd should bring upon himself, *ver. 17.* Woe to the idle shepherd that like an idol has eyes and sees not; that like an idol receives abundance of respect and homage from the people, and the chiefest of their offerings, but neither can nor will do them any kindness. He leaves the flock, when they most need his care, leaves them destitute, and flees because he is a hireling, his doom is that the sword of God's justice shall be upon his arm and his right eye, so that he shall quite lose the use of both. His arm shall wither and be dried up; so that he who would not help his friends when it was required, shall not know how to help himself; his right eye shall be utterly darkened, that he shall not discern the danger that his flock is in, nor know which way to look for relief. This was fulfilled when Christ said to the Pharisees, *I am come that they which see may be made blind*, *John ix. 39.* Those that have gifts which qualify them to do good, if they do not do good with them, they shall be taken away from them; those that should have been workmen but were slothful and would do nothing, will justly have their arm dried up; and that should have been watchmen, but were sleepy, and would never look about them, will justly have their eye blinded.

## C H A P. XII.

The apostle Gal. iv. 25, 26 distinguisheth between Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children, the remaining carcase of the Jewish church that rejected Christ; and Jerusalem that is from above, that is free, and is the mother of us all: the Christian church, the spiritual Jerusalem, which God has chosen to put his name there; in the chapter before we read the doom of the former, and left that carcase to be a prey to the eagles that should be gathered to it. Now in this chapter we have the blessings of the latter, many precious promises made to the gospel Jerusalem by him who, *ver. 1.* declares his power to make them good. It is promised, (1.) That the attempts of the church's enemies against her, shall be to their own ruin, and they shall find it is at their peril if they do her any hurt, *cr. 2, 3, 4, 6.* (2.) That the endeavours of the church's friends and patrons for her good shall be pious, regular, and successful, *ver. 5.* (3.) That God will protect and



and strengthen the meanest and weakest that belong to his church, and work salvation for them, ver. 7, 8. (4.) That as a preparative for all this mercy and a pledge of it, he will pour upon them a spirit of prayer and repentance, the products of which shall be universal and very particular, ver. 9-14. These promises were of use then to the pious Jews that lived in the troublous times under Antiochus and other persecutors and oppressors, and they are still to be improved in every age for the directing of our prayers, and the encouraging of our hopes with reference to the gospel church.

**I. THE** burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of a man within him. 2. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. 3. ¶ And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. 4. In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. 5. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. 6. ¶ In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an ear of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. 7. The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. 8. In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.

Here is, 1. The title of this charter of promises made to God's Israel: it is the *burden of the word of the Lord*, a divine prediction; it is of weight in the delivery of it; it is to be pressed upon people, and will be very pressing in the accomplishment of it; it is a *burden*, a heavy burden to all the church's enemies, like that *talent of lead*, chap. v. 7, 8. But it is *for Israel*; it is for their comfort and benefit. As even the *fiery law*, Deut. xxxiii. 2. so the fiery prophecies and fiery providences that come from God's right hand, come for them; the word that speaks terror to their enemies, speaks peace to them; as the pillar of cloud and fire which turned a bright side towards the Israelites to direct and encourage them, but a black side towards the Egyptians to terrify and dispirit them. Happy they that have even the *burdens of God's word* for them, as well as the blessings of it.

2. The title of him that grants this charter, which is prefixed to it, to shew that he hath both authority to make these promises, and ability to make them good, for he is the Creator of the world, and our Creator; and therefore has no incontestible, irresistible dominion. (1.) He *stretcheth out the heavens*; not only he did so at the first, when he said, *Let there be a firmament*, and he made the firmament, but he doth so still, he keeps them stretched out like a curtain, keeps them from running in, and will do so till the end comes, when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. No bounds can be set to his power that stretcheth out the heavens, nor can any thing be too hard for him. (2.) He *layeth the foundation of the earth*, and keeps it firm and fixed on its own basis, or rather on its own axis, though it is founded on the seas, Psal. xxiv. 1-7. nay, though it is hung upon nothing, Job xxvi. 7. The founder of this earth is no doubt the ruler of it, and judgeth in it, and they deceive themselves who say, *The Lord has forsaken the earth*, for if he had it would have sunk, since it is he that not only did lay its foundations at first, but doth still lay them, still upholds them. (3.) He *formeth the spirit of a man within him*, i. e. He made us these souls, Jer. xxxviii. 16. He not only breathed into the first man, but still breathes into every man the breath of life, the body is derived from the fathers of our flesh, but the soul is infused by the Father of spirits, Heb. xii. 9. He *fashioneth men's hearts*; they are in his hand, and he turns them as the rivers of water, and casts them into what mould he pleaseth, so as to serve his own purposes with them; and can therefore save his church by inspiring his friends, and dispiriting his enemies, and will eternally save all his chosen by forming their spirits anew.

3. The promises themselves that are here made them, by which the church shall be secured, and in which all its friends may enjoy a holy security.

1. It is promised that whatever attacks the enemies of the church may make upon her purity or peace, they will certainly issue in their own confusion. The enemies of God and of his kingdom bear a great deal of malice and ill-will to Jerusalem, and form designs for its destruction, but it will prove at last that they are but preparing ruin for themselves: Jerusalem is in safety, and they are in all the danger that fight against it. This is here illustrated by three comparisons.

(1.) Jerusalem shall be a cup of trembling to all that lay siege to it, ver. 2. They promise themselves that it shall be to them a cup of wine, which they shall easily and with pleasure drink off, and they thirst for its spoils, nay, they thirst for its blood, as for such a cup, but it shall prove a cup of slumber, nay, a cup of poison to them, which when they take into their hands, and think it is all their own, they shall not be able to drink off, the fumes of it shall give them enough. When the kings were assembled against her, and saw how God was known in her palaces for a refuge, they trembled and hastened away, fear took hold upon them, as we find, Psal. xlviii. 3, 4, 5, 6. Thus Alexander the Great was struck with amazement when he met Jaddus the high priest, and was deterred thereby from offering any violence to Jerusalem. When Sennacherib laid siege against Judah and Jerusalem, he found then such a cup of stupifying wine as laid all his mighty men asleep, Psal. lxxvi. 5, 6. Some read it, I will make Jerusalem a post of contrition or breaking: they that make any attempts upon Jerusalem, do but run their

heads against a post, which they cannot move, but are sure to hurt themselves. The blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall, Isa. xxv. 4. broken by it, but not shaking it. God's church is a cup of consolation to all her friends, Isa. lxi. 11, but a cup of trembling to all that would either debauch her by errors and corruptions, or destroy her by wars and persecutions. See Isa. li. 22, 23.

(2.) Jerusalem shall be a burdensome stone to all that attempt to remove it or carry it away, ver. 3. All the people of the earth are here supposed to be gathered together against it: some one time, and some another; there has been a succession of enemies, from age to age, making war upon the church; nay, though they were all at once in a confederacy against it, and had formed a resolution to cut off the name of Israel, that it should be no more in remembrance, Psal. lxxxiii. 4. They will find it a task too hard for them; they that are for keeping up and advancing the kingdom of sin in the world, look upon Jerusalem, even the church of God, as the great obstacle to their designs, and they must have it out of the way; but they will find it heavier than they think it is; so that, (1.) They cannot remove it; God will have a church in the world in spite of them; it is built upon a rock, and is as mount Zion that abideth for ever, Psal. cxxv. 1. This stone cut out of the mountain without hands, will not only keep its ground, but fill the earth, Dan. ii. 35. Nay, (2.) It will break in pieces all that burden themselves with it, as that stone smote the image, Dan. ii. 45. All that think themselves a match for it shall be cut in pieces by it. Some think it is an allusion to a sport, which Jerom upon this place saith, was in use among the Jews, as among us: young men tried their strength, and strove for mastery, by heaving up great stones, which if they proved too heavy for them, fell upon them and bruised them. Those that make a jest of religion, and banter sacred things, will find them a burdensome stone, that it is ill-jesting with edge tools, and though they make light of it, saying, *Am not I in sport?* they bring upon themselves an insupportable sinking load of guilt. Our Saviour seems to allude to these words when he speaks of himself as a burdensome stone to those that would not have him for their foundation-stone, which shall fall upon them and grind them to powder, Matt. xxi. 44.

(3.) The governors of Judah shall be among their enemies like a hearth of fire among the wood, and a torch of fire in a sheaf, ver. 6. Not that their own passions shall make them incendiaries and firebrands to all about them; no, Zion's king is meek and lowly, and all subordinate governors must be like him: but God's justice will make them avengers of his cause, and theirs upon their enemies. They that contend with them will find it is like an opposition given by briars and thorns by a consuming fire, Isa. xxvii. 4. It will go through them and burn them together. It is God's wrath and not theirs that is the fire which devours the adversaries. God's fire is said to be in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem, Isa. xxxi. 9. The enemies thought to be as water to this fire, to extinguish it and put it quite out, but God will make them as wood, nay, as a sheaf of corn, which is more combustible to this fire, not only to be consumed by it, but to be made thereby to burn the more strongly. When God would make Abimelech and the men of Shechem one another's destroyers; fire is said to come out from the one to devour the other, Judg. ix. 20. So here, fire shall come out from the governors of Judah, to devour all the people round about, as from the mouth of God's witnesses, to consume those who offer to hurt them, Rev. xi. 5. The persecutors of the primitive church found this fulfilled in it, witness Lactantius's history of God's judgments upon the primitive persecutors, and the confession of Julian the apostate at last. *Thou hast overcome me, O thou Galilean*; the church's motto may be, *Nemo ne impune te sitit*. If you are weary of your life, persecute the Christians, was once a proverb.

2. It is promised that God will insatiate the counsels and enfeeble the courage of the church's enemies, ver. 4. In that day when the people of the earth are gathered together against Jerusalem, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness; and again, I will smite every horse of the people with blindness, so that they shall be no way serviceable to them; blinding the horses will be as bad as muzzling them. The horses and their horsemen shall both forget the military exercise to which they were trained, and instead of keeping ranks and observing the rules of their discipline, they shall both grow mad and ruin themselves. The church's infantry shall be quite too hard for the enemy's cavalry; and those that are upbraided with trusting in horses shall be baffled by those who were forbidden to multiply horses.

3. It is promised that Jerusalem shall be re-peopled and replenished, ver. 6. Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The natives of Jerusalem shall not incorporate in a colony in some other country, and build a city there, and call that Jerusalem, and see the promises fulfilled in that, as those in New England called their towns by the names of towns in Old England; no, they shall have a new Jerusalem upon the same foundation, the same spot of ground with the old one. They had so after their return out of captivity, but this was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which is a Jerusalem inhabited in its own place, for the gospel being to be preached to all the world, it may call every place its own.

4. It is promised that the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be enabled to defend themselves, and yet shall be taken under the divine protection, ver. 8. See here in what method God preserves his church and those that are his, from the gates of hell to and through the gates of heaven. (1.) He doth himself secure them; In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Not only Jerusalem itself from being taken and destroyed, but every inhabitant of it from being any way damaged. God will not only be a wall of fire about the city to fortify that, but he will compass particular persons with his favour as with a shield, so that no dart of the besiegers shall touch them. (2.) He doth it by giving them strength and courage to help themselves: what God works in his people by his grace contributes more to their preservation and defence, than what he works for them by his providence. The God of Israel gives strength and power to his people, that they may do their part, and then he will not be wanting to do his. It is the glory of God to strengthen the weak that most need his help, to see and own their need of it, and will be the most thankful for it. (1.) In that day the feeblest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as David; shall be men of war as bold and brave, as skilful and strong as David himself; shall enterprize and accomplish great things as David did, and become as serviceable to Jerusalem in guarding it, as David himself was in founding it, and as formidable as he was to the enemies of it. See what divine grace doth, it makes children not only men but champions; makes weak saints to be not only good soldiers but great soldiers, like David. And see how God often doth his own work as easily and effectually, and more to his own glory, by weak and obscure instruments than by the most illustrious. (2.) The house of David shall be as God, i. e. as the angel of the Lord before him. Zerubbabel was now the top-branch of the house of David, he shall be endued with wisdom and grace for the service to which he is called, and shall go before the people as an angel; as that angel (so some think) which went before the people of Israel through the wilderness, who was God himself Exod. xliii. 20. God will increase the gifts and abilities both of the people and princes, in proportion to the respective services for which they are designed.



designed. It was said of David that he was *as an angel of God to discern good and bad*, 2 Sam. xiv. 17. Such shall now the house of David be. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be strong and fit for action as nature made David, and their magistrates as wise and fit for counsel as grace made him. But this was to have its full accomplishment in Christ, now the house of David looked little and mean, and his glory was eclipsed, but in Christ the house of David shone more bright than ever, and its countenance was as that of an angel; in him it became more blessed, and more a blessing than ever it had been.

5. It is promised that there shall be a very good understanding between the city and the country, and the balance shall be kept even between them; there shall be no mutual envies or jealousies between them; they shall not keep up any separate interests, but shall heartily unite in their counsels, and act in concert for the common good; and this happy agreement between the city and the country, the head and the body, is very necessary to the health, welfare, and safety of any nation.

1. The governors of Judah, the magistrates and gentry of the country, shall think honourably of the citizens, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the merchants and tradesmen, they shall not run them down, and contrive how to keep them under, but they shall say in their hearts, not in compliment, but in sincerity. *The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength*, the strength of my country, of my family, in the Lord of hosts their God, ver. 5. They will therefore upon all occasions pay respect and deference to Jerusalem, as the mother-city, the ruling-city, and the city that is to be first served, because they look upon it to be the bulwark of the nation; and its strongest fortification in times of public danger and distress; which therefore they would all come into the assistance of, and come under the protection of; and this not so much because it was a rich city, and money is the sinews of war, or because it was a populous city, and could bring the greatest numbers into the field, or because its inhabitants were generally the most ingenious, active men, the best soldiers, and the best commanders. *Of Zion it shall be said, that this and that brave man was born there*; but because it was a holy city where God's house and household, the temple and the priests were, where his worship was kept up, and his feasts observed: and because it should now be more than ever a praying city, for upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem God will pour a spirit of supplication, ver. 10. therefore the governors of Judah shall say, *these are my strength*; they are so upon the account of their relation to, their interest in, and their communion with the Lord of hosts their God. Because the Lord of hosts is in a particular manner their God, for in Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion, therefore they shall be my strength. Note, It is well with a kingdom when its great men know how to value its good men; when its governors look upon religion and religious people to be their strength, and that it is their interest to support them and learn to call godly praying people and skilful faithful ministers, the chariots and horsemen of Israel, as Joash called Elishah, and not the troubles of the land, as Ahab called Elijah.

2. The court and the city shall not despise or look with contempt upon the inhabitants of the country, no not the meanest of them, much less upon the governors of Judah. For God will put signal honour upon Judah, and so save them from the contempt of their brethren. As Jerusalem was dignified by special ordinances, so Judah shall be dignified with special providences. God saith, ver. 4. *I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah*; upon the poor country people; proud men scornfully overlook them, but the great God will graciously look upon them, and look after them. Nay, ver. 7. *The Lord shall save the tents of Judah first*. They that dwell in tents lie most exposed, but God will remarkably protect and deliver them before those that dwell in Jerusalem. He will appear glorious in what he doth for the inhabitants of his villages in Israel, Judges v. 11. Thus in the mystical body, God gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there may be no schism in the body, see 1 Cor. xii. 22-25. which is the reason here given, that the glory of the house of David that have great power, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem that have great wealth, and both which live in great pomp and pleasure, may not magnify themselves against Judah, and the tents of Judah, the dwellers in which work hard and fare hard, and perhaps are not so well bred. Note, Courtiers and citizens ought not to despise country people, or look with disdain upon those whom God opens his eyes upon, and who are first saved; while it is so hard for the rich and great to enter the kingdom of God. If God by his grace has magnified the dwellers in the tents of Judah, having chosen the weak and foolish things of the world, and chosen to employ them, we affront him if we vilify them, or magnify ourselves against them, Jam. ii. 5, 6. This promise has a further reference to the gospel-church, in which no difference shall be made between high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, circumcision and uncircumcision, but all shall be alike welcome to Christ, and partake of his benefits, Col. iii. 11. Jerusalem shall not then be thought, as it had been, more holy than other parts of the land of Israel.

9. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 10. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born. 11. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. 12. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart, the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; 13. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; 14. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

The day here spoken of is the day of Jerusalem's defence and deliverance, that glorious day when God will appear for the salvation of his people; which if it do refer to the successes which the Jews had against their enemies in the time of the Maccabees, yet certainly it looks further to the gospel day: to Christ's victories over the powers of darkness, and the great salvation he has wrought for his chosen. Now we have here an account of two remarkable works designed in that day.

1. A glorious work of God to be wrought for his people, *I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem*, ver. 9. Nations came against Jerusalem, many and mighty nations, but they shall all be destroyed, their

power shall be broken and their attempts baffled; the mischief they intend shall return upon their own head. God will seek to destroy them; not as if he were at a loss for ways and means to bring it about; infinite wisdom was never nonplussed, but his seeking to do it intimates that he is very earnest and intent upon it: he is jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and has the day of vengeance in his heart: and that he over-rules means and instruments and all the motions and operations of second causes, in order to it. He is framing evil against them; when he seems to be setting them up he is seeking to destroy them. In Christ's first coming he sought to destroy him that had the power of death, and did destroy him, bruised the serpent's head, and broke all the powers of darkness that fought against God's kingdom among men, and the faithful friends and subjects of that kingdom; spoiled them, and made a show of them openly: In his second coming he will complete their destruction, when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality and power, and death itself shall be swallowed up in that victory; the last enemy that shall be destroyed of all that fought against Jerusalem.

2. A gracious work of God to be wrought in his people, in order to the work that is to be wrought for them. When he seeks to destroy their enemies, he will pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication. Note, when God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he doth is, to set them a praying; thus he seeks to destroy their enemies by stirring them up to seek to him that he would do it for them; because though he has purposed it, and promiseth it, and it is for his own glory to do it, yet he will for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Ask and it shall be given; this honour will he have to himself, and this honour will he put upon prayer and upon praying people. And it is a happy preface to the distressed church of deliverance approaching, and is as it were the dawns of its day, when his people are stirred up to cry mightily to him for it.

But this promise has reference to, and is performed in the graces of the Spirit given to all believers, as that Isa. xlv. 3. *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed*, which was fulfilled when Jesus was glorified, John vii. 39. It is a promise of the Spirit, and with him of all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ. Now observe here,

1. On whom these blessings are poured out; (1.) On the house of David, on the great men, for they are no more and no better than the grace of God makes them. It was promised, ver. 8, that the house of David shall be as the angel of the Lord. Now in order to that, the Spirit of grace is poured upon them; for the more the saints have of the Spirit of grace, the more like they are to the holy angels. When God was about to appear for the land, he poured his spirit of grace upon the house of David, the leading men of the land; it bodes well to a people when they go before the rest in that which is good, as 2 Chron. xx. 5. The house of David is all summed up in Jesus Christ, the son of David, and upon him, as the head, the Spirit of grace is poured out, from him to be diffused to all his members; from his fulness we receive, and grace for grace. (2.) On the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the common people; for the operations of the Spirit are the same upon the mean and weak Christians that they are upon the strong and more grown. The inhabitants of Jerusalem cannot influence public affairs by their powers and policies, so as the great men of the house of David may, yet they may do good service by their prayers, and therefore upon them the Spirit shall be poured out. The church is Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, all true believers that have their conversation in heaven are inhabitants of this Jerusalem, and to them this promise belongs, God will pour his spirit upon them. This is that earnest which all that believe in Christ shall receive; thus they are sanctified, thus they are sealed.

2. What these blessings are. *I will pour upon them the Spirit*. That includes all good things as it qualifies us for the favour of God, and all his other gifts. He will pour out the Spirit, (1.) As a Spirit of grace, to sanctify us and to make us gracious. (2.) As a Spirit of supplications, inclining us to, instructing and assisting us in the duty of prayer. Note, Wherever the Spirit is given as a Spirit of grace, he is given as a Spirit of sanctification. Wherever he is a spirit of adoption, he teacheth to cry, *Abba, Father*. As soon as ever Paul was converted, *Behold, he prays*, Acts ix. 11. You may as soon find a living man without breath as a living saint without prayer. There is a more plentiful effusion of the spirit of prayer now under the gospel than was under the law; and the further the work of sanctification is carried in us, the better is the work of supplication carried on by us.

3. What the effect of them will be. *I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace*, one would think it should follow, and they shall look on him whom they have believed, and shall rejoice, and it is true that that is one of the fruits of the pouring out of the Spirit, whence we read of the joy of the Holy Ghost; but it follows, *they shall mourn*, for there is a holy mourning that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit; a mourning for sin which is of use to quicken faith in Christ, and qualify for joy in God. It is here made the matter of a promise that they shall mourn, for there is a mourning that will end in rejoicing, and hath a blessing entailed upon it. This mourning is a fruit of the Spirit of grace, an evidence of a work of grace in the soul; and a companion of the spirit of supplication, as it expresseth lively affections working in prayer; hence prayers and tears are often put together, 2 Kings xx. 5. Jacob, that wrestler with God, wept and made supplication. But here is a mourning for sin, that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit.

1. It is a mourning grounded upon a sight of Christ, *they shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him*. Here, (1.) It is foretold that Christ should be pierced, and this scripture is quoted as that which was fulfilled when Christ's side was pierced upon the cross; see John xix. 37. (2.) He is spoken of as one whom we have pierced; it is spoken primarily of the Jews, who persecuted him to death; and we find that they who pierced him are distinguished from the other kindreds of the earth, that shall wail because of him, Rev. i. 7. yet it is true of us all as sinners, we have pierced Christ; inasmuch as our sins were the cause of his death, for he was wounded for our transgressions, and they are the grief of his soul; he is broken with the whorish heart of sinners, who therefore are said to crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame. (3.) Those that truly repent of sin look upon Christ as one whom they have pierced; who was pierced for their sins, and is pierced by them, and this engageth them to look unto him, as those that are deeply concerned for him. (4.) This is the effect of their looking to Christ, it makes them mourn. This was particularly fulfilled in those to whom Peter preached Christ crucified, when they heard it, they who had had a hand in piercing him were pricked to the heart, and cried out, *What shall we do?* It is fulfilled in all those who sorrow for sin after a godly sort; they look to Christ and mourn for him, not so much for his sufferings as for their own sins that procured them. Note, the genuine sorrows of a penitent soul, flow from the believing sight of a pierced Saviour. Looking by faith upon the cross of Christ will set us a mourning for sin after a godly sort.

2. It is a great mourning. (1.) It is like the mourning of a parent for the death of a beloved child. They shall mourn for sin as one mourneth for an only son, in whose grave the hopes of his family are buried, and shall be inwardly in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first born, as the Egyptians were when there was a cry throughout all their land for the death of their



their first-born: The sorrow of children for the death of their parents is sometimes counterfeited, is often small, and soon wears off and is forgotten; but the sorrow of parents for a child, for a son, for an only son, for a first-born, is natural, sincere, unforced and unaffected, it is secret and lasting; such are the sorrows of a true penitent, flowing purely from love to Christ above any other. (2.) It is like the mourning of a people for the death of a wife and good prince. It shall be like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon, where good king Josiah was slain, for whom there was a general lamentation, *ver.* 11. and perhaps the greater because they were told, it was their sin that provoked God to deprive them of so great a blessing; therefore they cried out, *The crown is fallen from our head; Woe unto us, for we have sinned*, Lam. v. 16. Christ is our king: our sins were his death, and for that reason ought to be our grief.

3. It is a general universal mourning, *ver.* 12. *The land shall mourn.* The land itself put on mourning at the death of Christ, for there was then darkness over all the land and the earth trembled; but this is a promise, that in consideration of the death of Christ, multitudes shall be effectually brought to sorrow for sin, and turn to God; it shall be such an universal gracious mourning as was when all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord, 1 Sam. vii. 2. Some think this is yet to have its complete accomplishment in the general conversion of the Jewish nation.

4. It is also a private, particular mourning. There shall be not only a mourning of the land, by its representatives in a general assembly, as *Judges* ii. 5. when the place was called Bochim, a place of weepers, but it shall spread itself into all corners of the land. *Every family apart shall mourn*, *ver.* 12. *All the families that remain*, *ver.* 14. All have contributed to the guilt, and therefore all shall share in the grief. Note, The exercises of devotion should be performed by private families among themselves, besides their joining in public assemblies for religious worship. National fasts must be observed not only in our synagogues but in our houses. In the mourning here foretold, the wives mourn apart by themselves, in their own apartment, as *Risler and her maids*. And some think it intimates their denying themselves the use even of lawful delights in a time of general humiliation, 1 Cor. viii. 5.

Four several families are here instanced in as examples to others in this mourning. (1.) Two of them are royal families: the house of David, in Solomon, and the house of Nathan, another son of David, brother to Solomon, from whom Zerubbabel descended, as appears by Christ's genealogy. *Luke* iii. 27—31. The house of David, particularly that of Nathan, which is now the chief branch of that house, shall go before in this good work; the greatest princes must not think themselves exempted from the law of repentance, but rather obliged most solemnly to express it, for the exciting of others; as Hezekiah humbled himself, 2 Chron. xxxii. 26. The princes and the king, 2 Chron. xii. 6. and the king of Ninveh, *Jonah* iii. 6. (2.) Two of them are sacred families, *ver.* 13. *The family of the house of Levi*, which was God's tribe, and in it particularly the family of Shimeon, which was a branch of the tribe of Levi, 1 Chron. vi. 17. and probably some of the descendants of that family were now of note for preachers to the people, or ministers to the altar; as the princes must mourn for the sins of the magistracy, so must the priests for the iniquity of the holy things. In time of general tribulation and humiliation the Lord's ministers are concerned to weep between the porch and the altar, *Joel* ii. 17. and not only there but in their houses apart; for in what families should godliness both in the form and in the power of it be found if not in ministers families?

## C H A P. XIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Some further promises relating to gospel times: here is a promise of the remission of sins, *ver.* 1. And of the reformation of manners, *ver.* 2. And particularly of the convicting and silencing of false prophets, *ver.* 2—6. (2.) A clear prediction of the sufferings of Christ and the dispersion of his disciples thereupon, *ver.* 7. And of the destruction of the greater part of the Jewish nation not long after, *ver.* 8. and of the purifying of a remnant of them, a peculiar people to God, *ver.* 9.

1. IN that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness. 2. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets, and the unclean spirit, to pass out of the land. 3. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother, that begat him, shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother, that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. 4. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied: neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: 5. But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. 6. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

Behold here the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, the sin of the church; for therefore was the Son of God manifested to take away our sin, 1 John iii. 5.

1. He takes away the guilt of sin by the blood of his cross, *ver.* 1. In that day, in the gospel-day, there shall be a fountain opened, i. e. provision made for the cleansing of all those from the pollutions of sin that truly repent and are sorry for them. In that day, when the Spirit of grace is poured out to set them a mourning for their sins, they shall not mourn as those that have no hope, but they shall have their sins pardoned, and the comfort of it in their bosoms. Their consciences shall be purified and pacified by the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin. 1 John i. 7. For Christ is exalted to give both repentance and remission of sins, and where he gives the one no doubt he gives the other. Their fountain opened in the pierced sides of Jesus Christ, spoken of just before, chap. xii. 10. for thence came there out blood and water and both for cleansing. And those who look upon Christ pierced and mourn for their sins that pierced him, and are therefore in his

service for him, may look again upon Christ pierced, and rejoice in him, because it pleased the Lord thus to smite the rock, that it might be to us a fountain of living waters. See here, (1.) How we are polluted; we are all so; we have sinned, and sin is uncleanness, it defiles the mind and conscience, renders us odious to God and uneasy in ourselves; unfit to be employed in the service of God and admitted into communion with him, as those that were ceremonially unclean were shut out of the sanctuary. The house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are under sin, which is uncleanness. The truth is, we are all as an unclean thing, and deserve to have our portion with the unclean. (2.) How we may be purged. Behold there is a fountain opened for us to wash in, and streams flowing to us from that fountain, so that if we be not clean it is our own fault. The blood of Christ and God's pardoning mercy in that blood revealed in the new covenant is, (1.) A fountain; for there is in them an inexhaustible fulness. There is mercy enough in God, and merit enough in Christ for the forgiving of the greatest sin and sinners, upon gospel-terms. Such were some of you, but you are washed, 1 Cor. vi. 11. Under the law there was a brazen laver, and a brazen sea to wash in; those were but vessels, but we have a fountain to apply ourselves to, overflowing, ever flowing. (2.) It is a fountain opened, for whoever will may come and take the benefit of it; it is opened, not only to the house of David, but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to the poor and mean as well as to the rich and great; or it is opened to all believers, who, as the spiritual seed of Christ, are of the house of David, and as living members of the church, are inhabitants of Jerusalem. Through Christ all that believe are justified, are washed from their sins in his blood, that they may be made to our God kings and priests, *Rev.* i. 5, 6.

2. He takes away the dominion of sin by the power of his grace, even of beloved sins: this evermore accompanies the former; those that are washed in the fountain opened as they are justified, so they are sanctified; the water came with the blood out of the pierced side of Christ. It is here promised that in that day,

1. Idolatry shall be quite abolished, and the people of the Jews shall be effectually cured of their inclination to it, *ver.* 2. I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land. The worship of the idols of their fathers shall be so perfectly rooted out, that in one generation or two it shall be forgotten that ever there were such it is among them; they shall either not be named at all or not with any respect; they shall no more be remembered, as was promised, *Hos.* ii. 17. This was fulfilled in the reformed conversion which the Jews had after the captivity to idols and idolatry, and still retain to this day; and in the ready conversion of many to the faith of Christ, by which they were taken off from making an idol of the ceremonial law, as the unbelieving Jews did; and is still in the fulfilling when souls are brought off from the world and the flesh, those two great idols, that they may cleave to God only.

False prophecy shall also be brought to an end. I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit, i. e. the prophets that are under the influence of the unclean spirit, to pass out of the land: the devil is an unclean spirit, sin and uncleanness are from him; he hath his prophets, that serve his interests, and receive their instructions from him. Take away the unclean spirit and the prophets would not a cease as they do; take away the false prophets that produce sham-commissions, and the unclean spirit could not do the mischief he doth. When God designs the silencing of the false prophets he banisheth the unclean spirit out of the land; that wrought in them, and was a rival with him for the throne in the heart.

The church of the Jews when they were addicted to idols did also dote much upon false prophets, that flattered them in their sins with promises of impunity and peace, but here it is promised as a blessed effect of the promised reformation, that they should be very much set against false prophets, and zealous to clear the land of them; they were so after the captivity, till through the blindness of their zeal against false prophets they had put Christ to death under that character, and after that there arose many false Christs, and false prophets, and deceived many, *Matt.* xxiv. 11. It is here foretold,

1. That false prophets instead of being indulged and favoured should be brought to condign punishment, even by their nearest relations, which would be as great an instance as any other of flagrant zeal against those deceivers, *ver.* 3. When any shall set up for a prophet, and shall speak lies in the name of the Lord, shall preach that which tends to draw people from God, and to confirm them in sin, his own parents shall be the first and most forward to prosecute him for it, according to the law, *Deut.* xiii. 6—11. If thy son entice thee secretly from God, thou shalt surely kill him. Shew thy indignation against him, and prevent any further temptation from him. His father and his mother shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. Note, We ought to conceive and always to retain a very great detestation and dread of every thing that would draw us out of the way of our duty into by-paths as those who cannot bear that which is evil, *Rev.* ii. 2. And holy zeal for God and godliness will make us hate sin, and dread temptation most in those whom naturally we love best, and who are nearest to us; there our danger is greatest as Adam's from Eve, Job's from his wife, and there it will be the most praiseworthy to shew our zeal as Levi, who in the cause of God did not acknowledge his brethren, or know his own children, *Deut.* xxxiii. 9. Thus we must hate and forsake our nearest relations, when they come in competition with our duty to God, *Luke* xiv. 26. Natural affections, even the strongest, must be over-ruled by gracious affections.

2. That false prophets should be themselves convinced of their sin and folly, and let fall their pretensions, *ver.* 4. The prophet shall be ashamed every one of his vision, they shall not repeat it, or insist upon it, but desire that it may be forgotten and no more said of it, being ready themselves to own it was a sham; either because God has by his grace awakened their consciences, and shewed them their error, or because the event disproves their predictions, and gives them the lie, or because their prophecies do not meet with such a favourable reception as they used to meet with, but are generally despised and distasteful they perceive the people ashamed of them, which makes them begin to be ashamed of themselves. And therefore they shall no longer wear a rough garment, or garment of hair, as the true prophets used to do, in imitation of Elijah, and in token of their being mortified to the pleasures and delights of sense. The pretenders had appeared in the habit of true prophets, but their folly being now made manifest they shall lay it aside, no more to deceive and impose upon unthinking unwary people by it. A modest dress is a very good thing if it be the genuine indication of a humble heart, and is to instruct, but an ill thing if it be the hypocritical disguise of a proud ambitious heart, and is to deceive. Let men be really as good as they seem to be, but not seem to be better than really they are. The pretender as a true penitent, (1.) Shall undeceive those whom he had imposed upon. He shall say, I am no prophet, as I have pretended to be, was never designed or set apart to the office, never educated or brought up for it, never conversant among the sons of the prophets. I am an husbandman, and was bred to that business. I was never taught of God to prophesy, but taught of man to keep cattle. Amos was originally such a one too, and yet was afterwards called to be a prophet, *Amos* vii. 14, 15. But this deceiver never had any such call. Note, Those who sorrow after a godly sort for their having deceived others, will be forward to confess



their sin, and will be so just as to rectify the mistakes which they have been the cause of. Thus they who had used curious arts when they were converted *shed their deeds*, and by what fallacies they had cheated the people. *Acts xix. 18.* (2.) He shall return to his own proper employment which is the fittest for him; *I will be a husbandman*, so it may be read, I will apply myself to my calling again, and meddle no more with things that belong not to me, for *man taught me to keep cattle from my youth*, and cattle I will go keep, and never set up for a preacher any more. Note, When we are convinced that we are gone out of the way of our duty, we must evidence the truth of our repentance by returning to it again, though it be never so much a mortification to us. (3.) He shall acknowledge those to be his friends that by a severe discipline were instrumental to bring him to a sight of his error, *ver. 6.* when he who with the greatest assurance had asserted himself so lately to be a prophet, suddenly drops his claims, and saith, I am no prophet, every body will be surprised at it, and some will ask, *What are these wounds or marks of stripes in thine hands?* How camest thou by them? Hast thou not been examined by scourging? And is not that it that has brought thee to thyself? *Vexatio dat intellectum*; hast thou not been beaten into this acknowledgment? Was it not the rod and reproval that gave thee this wisdom? And he shall own, yes, it was, these are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends, that bound me and used me hardly and severely as a distracted man, and so brought me to my senses. By this it appears that those parents of the false prophet that thrust him through, *ver. 5.* did not do it till they had first tried to reclaim him by correction; and he would not be reclaimed, for so was the law concerning a disobedient son, his parents must first have chastened him in vain before they bring him forth to be stoned, *Deut. xxi. 18, 19.* But here is another that was reduced by stripes and so prevented the capital punishment; and he had that sense and honesty to own that they were his friends, his real friends, who thus wounded him that they might reclaim him; for *faithful are the wounds of a friend*, *Prov. xxvii. 6.* Some good interpreters observing how soon this comes after the mention of Christ's being pierced, think that these are the words of that great prophet, not of the false prophet spoken of before; Christ was wounded in his hands, when he was nailed to the cross, and after his resurrection he had the marks of these wounds: and here he tells how he came by them; he received them as a false prophet, for the chief priests called him a deceiver, and upon that account would have him crucified; but he received them in the house of his friends, the Jews that should have been his friends: for *he came to his own*; and though they were his bitter enemies, yet he was pleased to call them his friends, as he did Judas, *Friend, wherefore art thou come?* Because they forwarded his sufferings for him; as he called Peter, Satan, an adversary, because he dissuaded him from them.

7. ¶ Awake O sword against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, faith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. 8. And it shall come to pass that in all the land, faith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off, and die; but the third shall be left therein. 9. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

Here is a prophecy,

1. Of the sufferings of Christ, of him who was to be pierced and was to be the fountain opened. *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd*, *ver. 7.* These are the words of God the Father, giving order and commission to the sword of his justice to awake against his son, when he had voluntarily made his soul an offering for sin: for it pleased the Lord to bruise him; and put him to grief; and he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, *Isa. liii. 4, 10.* Observe, (1.) How he calls him, As God he is my fellow, for he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he and the Father are one. He was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, and in the work of man's redemption he was his elect, in whom his soul delighted, and the counsel of peace was between them both. As mediator he is my shepherd, that great and good shepherd that undertook to feed the flock, *chap. xi. 7.* He is the shepherd that was to lay down his life for the sheep. (2.) How he useth him. *Awake, O sword, against him.* If he will be a sacrifice, he must be slain, for without the shedding of blood, the life-blood, there was no remission. Men thrust him through as a foolish shepherd, God thrust him through as the good shepherd, compare *ver. 3.* that he might purchase the flock of God with his own blood, *Acts xx. 28.* It is not a charge given to a rod to correct him, but to a sword to slay him, for *Messiah the prince must be cut off*, but not for himself, *Dan. ix. 26.* It is not the sword of war to whom he has given this charge, that he may die in the bed of honour, but the sword of justice, that he may die as a criminal upon an ignominious tree. This sword must awake against him; he having no sin of his own to answer for, the sword of justice had nothing to say to him of itself, till by particular order from the Judge of all, it was warranted to brandish itself against him. He was the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, in the decree and counsel of God, but the sword designed against him had long slumbered, till now at length it is called upon to awake, not awake and frighten him, but awake and smite him; strike home: not with a drowsy blow, but an awakened one; for God spared not his own Son.

2. Of the dispersion of the disciples thereupon. *Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.* This our Lord Jesus himself saith was fulfilled, when all his disciples were offended because of him in the night wherein he was betrayed, *Matth. xxvi. 31.* *Mark xiv. 27.* They all forsook him and fled. The smiting of the shepherd is the scattering of the sheep. They were scattered every one to his own and left him alone, *John xvi. 32.* Herein they were like timorous sheep, yet the shepherd thus provided for their safety, for he said *If ye seek me, let these go their way.* Some make another application of this: Christ was the shepherd of the Jewish nation; he was smitten, they themselves smote him, and therefore they were justly scattered abroad; and dispersed among the nations, and remain so at this day. These words *I will turn my hand upon the little ones*, may be understood either as a threatening as Christ suffered so shall his disciples; they shall drink of the cup that he drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with; or as a promise that God would gather Christ's scattered disciples together again, and he should give them the meeting in Galilee. Though the little ones among Christ's soldiers may be dispersed, they shall rally again, the lambs of his flock, though frightened by the brays of prey shall recover themselves, shall be gathered in his arms, and laid in his bosom. Sometimes when the

sheep are scattered and lost in the wilderness, yet the little ones, which it was feared would be a prey, *Numb. xiv. 31.* are brought in, are brought home, and God turns his hand upon them.

3. Of the rejection and ruin of the unbelieving Jews, *ver. 8.* and this word has and shall have its accomplishment in the destruction of the corrupt and hypocritical part of the church. *It shall come to pass that in all the land of Israel two parts shall be cut off and die*; the Roman army laid the country waste, and slew at least two thirds of the Jews. Some understand by the cutting off and dying of two parties in all the earth, the abolishing of Heathenism and Judaism, that Christianity the third part might be left to reign alone. The Jewish worship was quite taken away by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. And some time after Pagan idolatry was in a manner extirpated, when the empire became Christian.

4. Of the reformation and preservation of the chosen remnant, those of them that believed, and the Christian church in general, *ver. 9.* The third part shall be left, when Jerusalem and Judea were destroyed, all the Christians in that country having among them the warning Christ gave to them to flee to the mountains, shifted for their own safety, and were sheltered in a city called Pella on the other side Jordan. We have here first the trials, and then the triumphs of the Christian church, and of all the faithful members of it. (1.) Their trials. I will bring that third part through the fire of affliction, and will refine and try them as silver and gold are refined and tried. This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the primitive church, the fiery trial which tried the people of God then, *1 Pet. iv. 12.* Those that God sets apart for himself must pass through a probation and purification in this world; they must be tried that their faith may be found to praise and honour, *1 Pet. i. 6, 7.* as Abraham's faith was when it was tried by the command given him to offer up Isaac; now know I that thou fearest me. They must be tried, that both they that are perfect, and they that are not, may be made manifest. They must be refined from their dross, their corruptions must be purged out, they must be brightened and bettered. (2.) Their triumphs. (1.) Their communion with God is their triumph. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. They write to God by prayer, and receive from him answers of peace, and thus keep up a comfortable communion with him; this honour have all his saints. (2.) Their covenant with God is their triumph. I will say, It is my people, whom I have chosen and loved, and will own; and they shall say, The Lord is my God, and a God sufficient to me; and in him they shall boast every day, and all the day long, *This God is our God for ever and ever.*

#### C H A P. XIV.

Divers things were foretold in the foregoing chapters which should come to pass in that day; and this chapter speaks of a day of the Lord that cometh, a day of his judgment; and ten times in the foregoing chapters, and seven times in this it is repeated, in that day, but what that day is that is here meant is uncertain, and perhaps will be so (as the Jews speak) till Elias comes; whether it refer to the whole period of time, from the prophet's days to the days of the Messiah, or to some particular events in that time or to Christ's coming, and the setting up of his kingdom upon the ruins of the Jewish polity, we cannot determine; but divers passages here seem to look as forward as gospel times. Now the day of the Lord brings with it both judgment and mercy; mercy to his church, judgment to her enemies and persecutors. (1.) The gates of hell are here threatening the church, *ver. 1, 2.* and yet not prevailing. (2.) The power of heaven appears here for the church, and against the enemies of it, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* (3.) The events concerning the church are here represented as mixed, *ver. 6, 7.* but issuing well at last. (4.) The spreading of the means of knowledge is here foretold, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world, *ver. 8, 9.* which shall be the enlargement and establishment of another Jerusalem, *ver. 10, 11.* (5.) Those shall be reckoned with that fought against Jerusalem, *ver. 12-15.* and those that neglected his worship there, *ver. 17-19.* (6.) It is promised that there shall be great resort to the church, and great purity and piety in it, *ver. 16-20, 21.*

1. BEHOLD, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle. 4. ¶ And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it towards the south. 5. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. 6. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark. 7. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.

God's providences concerning his church are here represented as strangely changing and strangely mixed.

1. As strangely changing. Sometimes the tide runs high and strong against them, but presently turns and comes to be in favour of them; and God has for wise and holy ends set the one over against the other.

(1.) God here appears against Jerusalem; judgment begins at the house of God: when the day of the Lord cometh, *ver. 1.* Jerusalem must pass through the fire to be refined. God himself gathers all nations against Jerusalem to battle, *ver. 2.* he gives them a charge as he did Sennacherib, to take the spoil and to take the prey, *Isa. x. 6.* for the people of Jerusalem are now become



become the people of his wrath. And who can stand before him, or before nations gathered by him? Where he gives commission he will give success, the city shall be taken by the Romans, that have nations at command: the houses shall be rifled, and all the riches of them taken away by the enemy, and to gratify an insatiable lust of uncleanness as well as avarice, the women shall be ravished, as if victory were a licence to the worst of villainies, *Jusque datum sceleris*. One half of the city shall then be carried into captivity to be sold or enslaved, and shall not be able to help themselves, such is the destruction that shall be made in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

(2.) He presently changeth his way and appears for Jerusalem; for though judgment begin at the house of God, yet, as it shall not end there, so it shall not make a full end there, *Jer. iv. 27—xxx. 11*.

1. A remnant shall be spared; the same with that third part spoken of, *chap. xiii. 8*. One half shall go into captivity, whence they may hereafter be fetched back; and the residue of the people shall not be cut off, as one would have feared, from the city. Many of the Jews shall receive the gospel, and so shall prevent their being cut off from the city of God, his church upon earth. *In it shall be a tenth, Isa. vi. 13*. See *Ezek. v. 3*.

2. Their cause shall be pleaded against their enemies, *ver. 3*. Then when God has made use of these nations as a scourge to his people, he shall go forth and fight against them, by his judgments, as when he fought against the enemies of his church formerly, in the day of battle, with the Egyptians, Canaanites, and others. Note, The instruments of God's wrath will themselves be made the objects of it; for it will come to their turn to drink of the cup of trembling; and whom God fights against he will be sure to overcome and be too hard for. And every former day of battle which God has made to his people is a day of triumph, as it is an engagement to God to appear for his people, because he is the same, so it is an engagement to them to trust in him. It is observable, that the Roman empire never flourished after the destruction of Jerusalem as it had done before, but in many instances God fought against it.

3. Though Jerusalem and the temple be destroyed, yet God will have a church in the world, into which Gentiles shall be admitted, and with whom the believing Jews shall be incorporated, *ver. 4, 5*. These verses are dark and hard to be understood, but divers good expositors take this to be the meaning of them, (1.) God will carefully inspect Jerusalem, even then when the enemies of it are laying it waste; his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, whence he may take a full view of the city and temple, *Mark xiii. 3*. When the refiner puts his gold into the furnace he stands by it and has his eye upon it, to see that it receive no damage; so when Jerusalem, God's gold, is to be refined, he will have the oversight of it. He will stand by upon the mount of Olives, this was literally fulfilled when our Lord Jesus was often upon this mountain, especially when from thence he ascended up into heaven, *Acts i. 12*. It was the last place on which his feet stood on this earth, the place from which he took rise. (2.) The partition wall between Jews and Gentiles shall be taken away. The mountains about Jerusalem, and particularly this, signified to be an inclosure, and stood in the way of those that would approach to it. Between the Gentiles and Jerusalem this mountain of Bethel, of division stood, *Cant. ii. 17*. But by the destruction of Jerusalem this mountain shall be made to cleave in the midst, and so the Jewish pale shall be taken down, and the church laid in common with the Gentiles, who were made one with the Jews by the breaking down of this middle wall of partition, *Eph. ii. 14*. Who art thou, O great mountain? And a great mountain the ceremonial law was in the way of the Jews conversion, which one would think could never have been got over, yet before Christ and his gospel it was made plain: this mountain departs, this hill removes, but the covenant of peace cannot be broken; for peace is still preached to him that is afar off, and to them that are nigh. (3.) A new and living way shall be opened to the new Jerusalem, both to see it and to come into it. The mountain being divided one half towards the north, and the other half towards the south, there shall be a very great valley, *i. e.* a broad way of communication opened between Jerusalem and the Gentile world, by which the Gentiles shall have free admission into the gospel Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord that goes forth from Jerusalem shall have a free course into the Gentile world. Thus the way of the Lord is prepared, for every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and plain and pleasant valleys shall come in the room of them, *Isa. xl. 4*. (4.) Those of the Jews that believe shall come in and join themselves to the Gentiles, and incorporate with them in the gospel-church, ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains, that valley that is opened between the divided halves of the mount of Olives; they shall hasten into the church with the Gentiles, as formerly the Gentiles with them, *Zech. viii. 23*. The valley of the mountains is the gospel-church, to which there were added of the Jews daily such as should be saved, who fled to that valley as to their refuge. This valley of the mountains is said to reach unto Azah, or to the separate place, *i. e.* to all those whom God hath set apart for himself; when God makes his mountains away, *(Isa. xlix. 11)*, by making them a valley, the way shall be opened to all the way-faring men, *(Isa. xxxv. 8)*, and though fools they shall not err therein. Or to those that are now separated from God this valley shall reach; for the Gentiles that are afar off shall be made nigh with the Jews that are a people near unto him, and both have an access, a mutual access to each other, and a joint access to God as a Father by one Spirit, *Eph. ii. 18*. (5.) They shall flee to the valley of the mountains, to the gospel-church under dreadful apprehensions of their danger from the curse of the law. They shall flee from the wrath to come; from the avenger of blood that is in pursuit of them, to the church as to a city of refuge, or as doves to their windows, as they fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, *Amos i. 1*. Therefore the gospel reveals the wrath of God from heaven, *Rom. i. 18*, that we might be awakened to escape for our lives. Flee as from an earthquake, for we feel the earth ready to sink under us, and we can find no firm footing in it, and therefore must flee to Christ, in whom alone we can stand fast and be sure.

4. God shall appear in his glory for the accomplishing of all this. The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee, which may refer to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, or to destroy the enemies of Jerusalem, or his coming to set up his kingdom in the world, which is called the coming of the Son of man, *Mat. xxiv. 37*. Or to his last coming at the end of time; however it teaches us, (1.) That the Lord will come; it has been the faith of all the saints, behold, the Lord comes to fulfil every word that he hath spoken in its season. (2.) When he comes all his saints come with him, they attend his motions and are ready to serve his interests; Christ will come at the end of time with ten thousands of his saints, as when he came to give the law upon mount Sinai. (3.) Every particular believer being related to God as his God, may triumph in the expectation of his coming, and speak of it with pleasure, the Lord my God shall come, shall come to the comfort of all that are his; for, blessed Lord, all the saints shall be with thee, and it shall be their everlasting happiness to dwell in thy presence; and therefore come, Lord Jesus. And some think this may be read as a prayer, Yet, O Lord my God, come, and bring all the saints with thee.

2. God's providences appear here strangely mixed, *ver. 6, 7*. In that day of the Lord the light shall not be clear nor dark, nor day nor night; but at evening time it shall be light. Some refer this to all the time from hence to

the coming of the Messiah, the Jewish church had neither perfect peace nor constant trouble, but a cloudy day neither rain nor sun-shine. But it may be taken more generally, as designed to represent the method God usually takes in the administration of the kingdom both of providence and grace. Here is,

1. An idea of the usual course and tenor of God's dispensations; the day of his grace, and the day of his providence are neither clear nor dark, nor day nor night. It is so with the church of God in this world, where the sun of righteousness is risen it cannot be dark night, and yet short of heaven it will not be clear day. It is so with particular saints; they are not darkness but light in the Lord, and yet while there is so much error and corruption remaining in them, it is not perfect day. So it is as to the providences of God that are concerning his church, most an end the affairs of the church are neither good nor bad in any extremity, but there is a mixture of both, we are singing both of mercy and judgment, and are uncertain which will prevail, whether it be an evening or a morning twilight. We are between hope and fear, not knowing what to make of things.

2. An intimation of comfort with reference hereunto. It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord. This intimates, (1.) The beauty and harmony of such mixed events, there is one and the same design and tendency in all; all the wheels make but one wheel; all the revolutions but one day. (2.) The brevity of them; it is as it were but for one day, for a little moment; the cloud that darkens the light will soon blow over. (3.) The eye God has upon all these events, and the hand he has in them all; they are known to the Lord; he takes notice of them, and orders and disposeth of all for the best, according to the counsel of his will.

3. An issue very joyful secured at last; at evening time it shall be light; it shall be clear light; and no longer dark; we are sure of it in the other world, and we hope for it in this world. At evening time, when our hopes are quite spent with waiting all day to no purpose, nay, when we fear it will go to be quite dark, when things are at the worst, and the case of the church is most deplorable. As to the church's enemies the sun goes down at noon, so to the church it rises at night: unto the upright shines light out of darkness, *Psal. cxii. 4*. deliverance comes when the tale of bricks is doubled; and when God's people had done looking for it, and so it comes with a pleasing surprise.

5. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. 9. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. 10. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses. 11. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. 12. And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. 13. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. 14. And Judah shall also fight at Jerusalem: and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. 15. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in their tents, as this plague.

Here is, 1. Blessings promised to Jerusalem, the gospel Jerusalem, in the day of the Messiah, and to all the earth, by virtue of the blessings poured out on Jerusalem, especially to the land of Israel.

(1.) Jerusalem shall be a spring of living waters to the world: it was made so when the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and thence the word of the Lord diffused itself to the nations about, *ver. 8*. Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, for there they began, and thence they set out that were to preach repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, *Luke xxiv. 47*. Note, Where the gospel goes, and the graces of God's Spirit go along with it, there living waters go; those streams that make glad the city of our God, make glad the country also, and make it like paradise, like the garden of the Lord, which was well watered. It was the honour of Jerusalem that from thence the word of the Lord went forth, *Isa. ii. 3*, and thus far, even in its worst and most degenerate age, for old acquaintance sake it was made a blessing, and to be so is to be blessed. Half of these waters shall go towards the former sea, and half towards the hinder sea, as all rivers bend their course towards some sea or other, some eastward, others westward; the gospel shall spread into all parts of the world, some that lie remote from Jerusalem one way, and others that lie as far off another way; for the dominion of the Redeemer which was thereby to be set up must be from sea to sea, *Psal. lxxii. 8*, and the earth must be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, and as the waters that in various channels run to the sea. The knowledge of God shall diffuse itself, (1.) Every way. These living waters shall produce both eastern churches and western churches, that shall each of them in their turn be illustrious. (2.) Every day; in summer and in winter it shall be. Note, Those that are employed in spreading the gospel, may find themselves work both winter and summer; and are to serve the Lord therein at all seasons, *Acts xx. 18*. And such a divine power goes along with these living waters that they shall not be dried up, or the course of them be obstructed, either by the droughts in summer or the frosts in winter.

(2.) The kingdom of God among men shall be an universal and united kingdom, *ver. 9*. (1.) It shall be an universal kingdom; the Lord shall be king over all the earth. He is and ever was so of right; and in the sovereign disposals of his providence; his kingdom doth rule over all, and none are exempt from his jurisdiction; but it is here promised that he shall be so by actual possession of the hearts of his subjects; he shall be acknowledged king by



by all in all places, his authority shall be owned and submitted to, and allegiance sworn to him. This will have its accomplishment with that word, *Rev. xi. 15. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.* (2) It shall be an united kingdom. *There shall be one Lord, and his name one.* All shall worship one God only, and no idols, and shall be unanimous in the worship of him. All false gods shall be abandoned and all false ways of worship *abolished*, and as God shall be the center of their unity, in whom they shall all *meet*, so the scripture shall be the rule of their unity, by which they shall all *walk*.

3. The land of Judea and Jerusalem its mother city shall be *repaired and replanted*, and taken under the special protection of heaven, *ver. 10, 11.* Some think this speaks particular favour to the people of the Jews, and points at their conversion and restoration in the latter days; but it is rather to be understood figuratively of the gospel church, typified by Judah and Jerusalem, and it signifies the abundant graces with which the church shall be crowned, and the fruitfulness of its members, and the vast numbers of them. (1.) The church shall be like a *fruitful country*, abounding in all the rich products of the soil. The whole land of Judea, which is naturally uneven and hilly, shall be *turned as a plain*, its utmost border north, to Rimmon which lay south of Jerusalem, and was the utmost southern limit of Judea. The gospel of Christ when it comes in its power *levels the ground*, mountains and hills are brought low by it, that the Lord alone may be *exalted*. (2.) It shall be like a *populous city*. As the holy land shall be *levelled*, so the holy city shall be *peopled*; shall be rebuilt and *replenished*. *Jerusalem shall be lifted up* out of its low estate, shall be raised out of its ruins; when the land is *turned as a plain*, and not only the *mount of Olives* removed, *ver. 4.* but other mountains too, then Jerusalem shall be *lifted up*, i. e. it shall appear the more conspicuous; she shall be *inhabited in her place*, even in Jerusalem, chap. xii. 6. The whole city shall be inhabited in the utmost extent of it, and no part of it left to lie waste. The utmost limits of it are here mentioned, betwixt which there shall be no ground lost, but all *built upon*, from Benjamin's-gate north-east, to the corner-gate north-west; and from the tower of Hanan in the south, to the king's vine-presses in the north; when the churches of Christ in all places are replenished with great numbers of holy, humble, serious Christians, and many such are *daily added* to it, then this promise is fulfilled. (3.) This country and this city shall both be *safe*, both the meat in the country, and the mouths in the city, *they that dwell in it*, shall dwell securely, and there shall be none to make them afraid; there shall be no more of that utter destruction that has laid both town and country waste, no more anathema, as some read it, no more cutting off, no more curse or separation from God to evil, no more such desolating judgments as you have been groaning under, but Jerusalem shall be *safely inhabited*; there shall be no danger, nor any apprehension of it; neither shall its friends be *fearful* to disquiet themselves, nor its enemies *formidable* to disquiet them. That promise of Christ explains this, that the *gates of hell shall not prevail against the church*; and so doth that holy security and serenity of mind which believers enjoy in relying on the divine protection.

2. Here are judgments threatened against the enemies of the church, that have fought or do fight against Jerusalem; and the threatening of these judgments is in order to the preservation of the church in safety: men that read and hear of these plagues will be afraid of fighting against Jerusalem, much more when these threatenings are fulfilled in fact, will others hear and fear: those that fight against the city of God, and his people, will be found fighting against God, against whom none ever hardened his heart and prospered, *ver. 12. This shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem*; whoever they are, God will punish them for the affront done to him, and avenge Jerusalem upon them.

1. They shall waste away under grievous and languishing diseases. *Their flesh shall consume away*, and they shall be miserably emaciated, even *while they stand on their feet*, so that they shall be walking skeletons, nothing shall remain but skin and bones. The flesh which they pampered and indulged, and made provision for, when they were fed to the full with the spoils of God's people, shall now *consume away* that it cannot be seen, and the bones that were not seen shall stick out, *Job xxxiii. 21. They keep their feet, and hope to keep their ground*, crawling about as long as they can, but must yield at last. The organs of sight, the out-lets of sin, their eyes shall *consume away in their holes*, shall sink into their heads, or perhaps start out of them; their envious, malicious, adulterous eyes, the eyes they had so often fed with spectacles of misery, these shall *consume*, which shall make not only their countenances ghastly, but their lives wretched. The organs of speech, the out-lets of sin, their tongue shall *consume away in their mouth*; whereby God will reckon with them for all their blasphemies against himself, and invectives against his people. Thus their own tongues shall fall upon them, and their punishment shall be legible in their sin, as his was whose tongue was tormented in hell flames. Thus Antiochus and Herod consumed away.

2. They shall be dashed in pieces one against another, *ver. 13. A great tumult from the Lord shall be among them. But are tumults from the Lord, who is the God of order, and not of confusion?* As they are the sin of those that raise them, they are not from the Lord, but from the wicked one, and from men's own lusts, but as they are the punishment of those that suffer by them they are from the Lord, who serves his own purposes, and carries on his intentions by the sins and follies, and restless spirits of men. It is of themselves that they bite and devour one another; but it is of the Lord, the righteous judge, that thus they are consumed one of another, *Gal. v. 15. as Ahab was deceived by a lying spirit from the Lord*, so Abimelech and the men of Shechem were divided, and so destroyed by an evil spirit from the Lord, *Judges ix. 23*. Note, Those that are confederate and combined against the church will justly be separated, and set against one another; and their tumults raised against God will be avenged in tumults among themselves. And they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, to hold him from striking, or to bind him as his prisoner, nay, his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour, to strike and wound him. Note, Those that aim to destroy the church are often made to destroy one another; and every man's sword is sometimes set against his fellow, by him whose sword they all are.

Some think this was fulfilled in the factions and dissensions that were among the Jews, when the Romans were destroying them all; for they had fought against the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel church, and to that well enough agrees, *ver. 19. Thou also, O Judah, shalt fight against Jerusalem*, i. e. the Jewish nation shall be ruined by itself, shall die by its own hands; the city and country shall be at war with each other, and so both shall be destroyed. *Suis & ipsa Roma viribusruit.*

3. The plunder of their camp shall greatly enrich the people of God, or the spoils of their country, *ver. 14. Judah also shall eat at Jerusalem*, so one learned interpreter reads it, people shall come from all parts to share in the prey; as when Sennacherib's army was routed before Jerusalem, there was the prey of a great spoil divided, *Isa. xxxiii. 23.* so it shall be now; the wealth of all the heathen round about that had spoiled Jerusalem shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance, that

an equal dividend may be made among all the parties entitled to a share of the prize. Note, The wealth of the sinner is often laid up for the just, and the Israel of God enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians.

4. The very cattle shall share in the plague with which the enemies of God's church shall be cut off; as they did in divers of the plagues of Egypt, *ver. 15. All the beasts that shall be in the tents of these wicked men*, when God comes to contend with them, shall perish with them. Not only beasts used in war as the horse, but those used for travel, or in the plough, as the mule, the camel, and the ass. Note, The inferior creatures often suffer for the sin of man, and in his plagues. Thus God will show his indignation against sin, and will make the creature that is thus *subject to vanity*, groan to be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, *Rom. viii. 21, 22.*

16. ¶ And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. 17. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. 18. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 19. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feasts of tabernacles. 20. ¶ In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. 21. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be Holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and feed therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

Three things are here foretold,

1. That a gospel way of worship being set up in the church, there shall be a great resort to it, and a general attendance upon it. Those that were left of the enemies of religion shall be so sensible of the mercy of God to them in their narrow escape, that they shall apply themselves to the worship of the God of Israel, and pay their homage to him, *ver. 16.* Those that were not consumed shall be converted, and this makes their deliverance a mercy indeed, a double mercy; it is a great change that the grace of God makes upon them: they that had come against Jerusalem finding their attempts vain and fruitless, shall become as much her admirers as ever they had been her adversaries, and shall come to Jerusalem to worship there, and go in concurrence with those whom they had gone contrary to. Note, Christ's foes as some of them shall be made his footstool, so others of them shall be made his friends; and when the principle of enmity is slain in them their former acts of hostility are pardoned to them, and their services are admitted and accepted, as though they had never fought against Jerusalem. They shall go up to worship at Jerusalem, because that was the place that God had chosen, and there the temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation. Converting grace sets us right, (1.) In the object of our worship. They shall no longer worship the Molochs and Baals, the kings and lords that the Gentiles worship, the creature of their own imagination, but the King, the Lord of hosts, the everlasting King, the King of kings, the sovereign Lord of all. (2.) In the ordinances of worship, those which God himself hath appointed. Gospel worship is here represented by the keeping of the feasts of tabernacles, for the sake of those two great graces which were in a special manner *alleged and signified* in that feast, contempt of the world, and joy in God, *Neh. viii. 17.* The life of a good Christian is a constant feast of tabernacles, and in all acts of devotion we must retire from the world, and rejoice in the Lord; worship as in that feast. (3.) In the mediator of our worship; we must go to Christ our temple with all our offerings; for in him only our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God, *1 Pet. ii. 5.* If we rest in ourselves, we come short of pleasing God, we must go up to him, and mention his righteousness only. (4.) In the time of it, we must be constant. They shall go up from year to year, at the times appointed for this solemn feast. Every day of a Christian's life is a day of the feast of tabernacles, and every Lord's day especially that is the great day of the feast, and therefore every day we must worship the Lord of hosts, and every Lord's day with a peculiar solemnity.

2. That those who neglect the duties of gospel-worship shall be reckoned with for their neglect. God will compel them to come and worship before him, by suspending his favours from those that keep not his ordinances; upon them there shall be no rain, *ver. 17.* Some understand it figuratively; the rain of heavenly doctrine shall be withheld, and of the heavenly grace which should accompany that doctrine. God will command the clouds that they ruin no rain upon them. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to withhold the blessings of grace from those that do not attend the means of grace; to deny the green pastures to those that attend not the shepherd's tents. Or we may take it literally, on them there shall be no rain to make their ground fruitful. Note, The gifts of common providence are justly denied to those that neglect and despise instituted ordinances. Those that neglected to build the temple were punished with the want of rain, *Hag. ii. 17.* and so were they that neglected to attend there when it was built. If we be barren and unfruitful towards God, justly is the earth made so to us. Many are crossed and go backward in their affairs, and this is at the bottom of it, they do not keep close to the worship of God as they should; they go off from God, and then he walks contrary to them. If we omit or postpone the duties he expects from us, it is just with him to deny the favours we expect from him.

But what shall be done to the defaulters of the land of Egypt, to whom the threatening of the want of rain is no threatening, for they have no rain at any time, they need none, they desire none; the river Nilus is to them instead of the clouds of heaven, waters their land and makes it fruitful, so that what is a punishment to others is none to them; *ver. 18—19.* It is threatened that if the family of Egypt go not up that have no rain, yet God will find out a way to meet with them, for there shall be in effect the same plague wherewith other nations are smitten for their neglect. God can and often did restrain the overflowing of the river, which was equivalent to the shutting up of the clouds, or if the river did its part, and rose



as high as it used to do, God had other ways of bringing famine upon them, and destroying the fruits of their ground, as he did by divers of the ten plagues of Egypt, so that *this*, i. e. the same shall be the punishment of Egypt that is the punishment of other nations, who come not up to keep the feasts of tabernacles. Note, Those who think themselves least indebted to, and depending on the mercy of heaven, yet cannot therefore think themselves guarded against the justice of heaven. Those that can live without rain, it doth not therefore follow they can live without God; for not the heavens only, but all other creatures are that to us (and no more) that God makes them to be; nor can any man's way of living enable him to set light by the judgments of God. This shall be the punishment, (margin) *This shall be the sin of Egypt, and the sin of all nations, that come not up to keep the feasts of tabernacles.* The same word signifies both sin and the punishment of sin, so close and inseparable is the connection between them; as Gen. iv. 7. and sin is often its own punishment. Note, Omissions are sins, and we must come into judgment for them: those contract guilt that go not up to worship at the times appointed, as they have opportunity, and it is a sin that is its own punishment; for those who forsake the duty forfeit the privilege of communion with God.

3. That those who perform the duties of gospel worship shall have grace to adorn their profession by the duties of a gospel conversation too. This is promised, ver. 20, 21. and it is necessary to the completing of the beauty and happiness of the church. In general, all shall be holiness to the Lord. (1.) The name and character of holiness shall not be so confined as it had been; holiness of the Lord had been written only upon the high-priests forehead, but now it shall not be so appropriated. All Christians shall be living temples and spiritual priests, dedicated to the honour of God, and employed in his service. (2.) Real holiness shall be more diffused than it had been; because there shall be more powerful means of sanctification, more excellent rules, more cogent arguments and brighter patterns of holiness, and because there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of holiness and sanctification after Christ's ascension than ever before.

1. There shall be holiness introduced into common things; and those things devoted to God that seemed very foreign.

(1.) The furniture of their houses shall be consecrated to God. Upon the bells of the horses shall be engraven Holiness to the Lord, or upon the bridles of the horses, so the margin, or the trappings. The horses used in war shall no longer be used against God and his people as they have been, but for him and them. Even their wars shall be holy wars; their troopers serving under God's banner. Their great men that ride in state with a pompous retinue shall reckon it their greatest ornament to honour God with their honours; holiness to the Lord shall be written on the harness of their chariot-horses, as great men have sometimes their coat of arms with their motto painted on their coaches; every gentleman shall take the high-priest's motto for his, and glory in it, and make it a memento to himself not to do any thing unworthy of it. Travellers shall have it upon their bridles with which they guide their horses, as those that desire always to be put in mind of it, by having it continually before them, and to guide themselves in all their motions by this rule. The bells of the horses which are designed to quicken them in their journey, and to give notice of their approach, shall have Holiness to the Lord upon them, to signify that this is that we ought to be influenced by ourselves, and make profession of to others, wherever we go.

(2.) The furniture of their houses too shall be consecrated to God, to be employed in his service. (1.) The furniture of the priests' houses, or apart-

ments adjoining to the house of the Lord. The common drinking cups they used shall be like the bowls before the altar, that were used either to receive the blood of the sacrifices, or to present the wine and oil in, which were for the drink-offerings. The vessels which they used at their own tables shall be used in such a religious manner, with such sobriety and temperance, such devotedness to the glory of God, and such a mixture of pious thoughts and expressions, that their meals shall look like sacrifices: they shall not eat and drink to themselves, but to him that spreads their tables and fills their cups. And thus, in ministers families especially, should common actions be done after a godly sort, however they are done in other families. (2.) The furniture of other houses, those of the common people. Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord. The pots in which they boiled their meat, the cups out of which they drank their wine, Jer. xxxv. 5. In these God's good creatures shall never be abused to excess, nor that made the food and fuel of lust, which should have been oil to the wheels of obedience, as had formerly been, when all tables were full of vomit and filthiness, Isa. xxviii. 8. What they eat and drink out of, these shall nourish their bodies for the service of God; and out of these they shall give liberally for the relief of the poor; then are they Holiness to the Lord, as the merchandise and the hire of the converted Tyrians are said to be, Isa. xxiii. 18. for both in our gettings and in our spendings we must have an eye to the will of God as our rule, and the glory of God as our end. (3.) When there shall be such an abundance of real holiness, people shall not be nice and curious about ceremonial holiness. They that sacrifice shall come and take of these common vessels, and seethe their sacrifices therein, making no distinction between them and the bowls before the altar. In gospel-times the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth, and neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, John iv. 21. One place shall be as acceptable to God as another, I will that men pray every where; and one vessel as acceptable as another. Little regard shall be had to the circumstance, provided there be nothing indecent or disorderly, while the substance is religiously preserved and adhered to. Some think it intimates that there should be greater numbers of sacrifices offered than the vessels of the sanctuary would serve for; but rather than any should be turned back or deferred, they shall make no difficulty at all of using common vessels, as the Levites in a case of necessity helped the priests to kill the sacrifices, 2 Chron. xxix. 31.

There shall be no unholiness introduced into their sacred things, to corrupt them. In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts. Some read it, there shall be no more the merchant, for so a Canaanite sometimes signifies; and they think it was fulfilled when Christ once and again drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Or though those that were Canaanites, strangers and foreigners, shall be brought into the house of the Lord, yet they shall cease to be Canaanites; they shall have nothing of the spirit or disposition of Canaanites in them. Or it intimates, that though in gospel-times people shall grow indifferent as to holy vessels, yet they should be very strict in church-discipline, and careful not to admit the profane to special ordinances, but to separate between the precious and the vile, between Israelites and Canaanites. Yet this will not have its full accomplishment short of the heavenly Jerusalem, that house of the Lord of hosts into which no unclean thing shall enter; for at the end of time, and not before, Christ shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends; and the tares and wheat shall be perfectly and eternally separated.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH.

# AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of the Prophet

# MALACHI.

God's prophets were his witnesses to his church, each in their day, for several ages; witnesses for him and his authority, witnesses against sin and sinners, attesting the true intents of God's providences in his dealings with his people then, and the kind intentions of his grace concerning his church in the days of the Messiah, to whom all the prophets bear witness for they all agreed in their testimony; and now we have only one witness more to call, and we have done with our evidence; and though it be the last, and in him prophecy ceased, yet the Spirit of prophecy shines as clear, as strong, as bright in him, as in any that went before; and his testimony challengeth an equal regard. The Jews say prophecy continued forty years under the second temple, and this prophet they call the seal of prophecy, because in him the series or succession of prophets broke off and came to a period; God wisely ordered it, that divine inspiration should cease for some ages before the coming of the Messiah, that that great prophet might appear the more conspicuous and distinguishable, and be the more welcome. Let us consider, (1.) The person of the prophet; we have only his name, Malachi, and no account of his country or parentage. Malachi signifies my angel; which has given occasion for a conjecture that this prophet was indeed an angel from heaven, and not a man; as that, Judges ii. 1. But there is no just ground for the conjecture: Prophets were messengers, God's messengers; this prophet was so; his name is the very same with that which we find in the original, chap. iii. 1. for my messenger, and perhaps from that word he might (though probably he had another name) be called Malachi. The Chaldee paraphrase, and some of the Jews suggest that Malachi was the same with Ezra, but that also is groundless, Ezra was a scribe, but we never read that he was prophet. Others, yet further from probability, make him to be Mordecai. But we have reason to conclude he was a person whose proper name was that by which he is here called: the tradition of some of the ancients is, that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, and that he died young. (2.) The scope of the prophecy Haggai and Zechariah were sent to reprove the people for delaying to build the temple: Malachi was sent to reprove them for the neglect of it, when it was built, and for their profanation of the temple-service; for from idolatry and superstition they run into the other extreme of impiety and irreligion: and the sins he witnesseth against are the same that we find complained of in Nehemiah's time, with whom, it is probable, he was cotemporary. And now prophecy was to cease, he speaks more clearly of the Messiah as nigh at hand, than any other of the prophets had done: and concludes with a direction to the people of God to keep in remembrance the law of Moses, while they were in expectation of the gospel of Christ.



by all in all places, his authority shall be owned and submitted to, and allegiance sworn to him. This will have its accomplishment with that word. *Rev. xi. 15. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. (2) It shall be an united kingdom. There shall be one Lord, and his name one.* All shall worship one God only, and not idols, and shall be unanimous in the worship of him. All false gods shall be abandoned and all false ways of worship *abolished*, and as God shall be the center of their unity, in whom they shall all *meet*, so the scripture shall be the rule of their unity, by which they shall all *walk*.

3. The land of Judea and Jerusalem its mother city shall be *repaired and replenished*, and taken under the special protection of heaven, *ver. 10, 11.* Some think this speaks particular favour to the people of the Jews, and points at their conversion and restoration in the latter days; but it is rather to be understood figuratively of the gospel church, typified by Judah and Jerusalem, and it signifies the abundant graces with which the church shall be crowned, and the fruitfulness of its members, and the vast numbers of them. (1.) The church shall be like a *fruitful country*, abounding in all the rich products of the soil. The whole land of Judea, which is naturally uneven and hilly, shall be *turned as a plain*, its utmost border north, to *Kimmon* which lay *south of Jerusalem*, and was the utmost southern limit of Judea. The gospel of Christ when it comes in its power *levels the ground*, *mountains and hills are brought low* by it, that the Lord alone may be *exalted*. (2.) It shall be like a *populous city*. As the holy land shall be *levelled*, so the holy city shall be *peopled*; shall be *rebuilt and replenished*. *Jerusalem shall be lifted up* out of its low estate, shall be raised out of its ruins; when the *land is turned as a plain*, and not only the *mount of Olives* removed, *ver. 4.* but other mountains too, then Jerusalem shall be *lifted up*, i. e. shall appear the more conspicuous; she *shall be inhabited in her place*, even in *Jerusalem*, chap. xii. 6. The whole city shall be inhabited in the utmost extent of it, and no part of it left to lie waste. The utmost limits of it are here mentioned, betwixt which there shall be no ground lost, but all *built upon*, from *Benjamin's-gate* north-east, to the *corner-gate* north-west; and from the *tower of Hanan* in the south, to the *king's wine-presses* in the north; when the churches of Christ in all places are replenished with great numbers of holy, humble, serious Christians, and many such are *daily added* to it, then this promise is fulfilled. (3.) This country and this city shall both be *safe*, both the meat in the country, and the mountains in the city, *they that dwell in it*, shall dwell securely, and there shall be none to make them afraid; there shall be no more of that utter destruction that has laid both town and country waste, no more anathema, as some read it, no more cutting off, no more curse or separation from God to civil, no more such desolating judgments as you have been groaning under, but *Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited*; there shall be no danger, nor any apprehension of it; neither shall its friends be *fearful* to disquiet themselves, nor its enemies *formidable* to disquiet them. That promise of Christ explains this, that the *gates of hell shall not prevail against the church*; and so doth that holy security and serenity of mind which believers enjoy in relying on the divine protection.

2. Here are judgments threatened against the enemies of the church, that have fought or do fight against Jerusalem; and the threatening of these judgments is in order to the preservation of the church in safety: men that read and hear of these plagues will be afraid of fighting against Jerusalem, much more when these threatenings are fulfilled in fact, will others be afraid and fear: those that fight against the city of God, and his people, will be found fighting against God, against whom none ever hardened his heart and prospered, *ver. 12. This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem*; wherever they are, God will punish them, for the affront done to him, and avenge Jerusalem upon them.

1. They shall waste away under grievous and languishing diseases. *Their flesh shall consume away*, and they shall be miserably emaciated even *while they stand on their feet*, so that they shall be walking skeletons, nothing shall remain but skin and bones. *The flesh which they pampered and indulged*, and made provision for, when they were led to the full with the spoils of God's people, shall now *consume away that it cannot be seen*, and the bones that were not seen shall *stick out*, Job xxxiii. 21. They keep their feet, and hope to keep their ground, crawling about as long as they can, but must yield at last. The organs of sight, the out-lets of sin, their eyes *shall consume away in their holes*, shall sink into their heads, or perhaps start out of them; their envious, malicious, adulterous eyes, the eyes they had so often fed with spectacles of misery, the flesh shall *consume*, which shall make not only their countenances ghastly, but their lives wretched. The organs of speech, the outlets of sin, their *tongue shall consume away in their mouth*; whereby God will reckon with them for all their blasphemies against himself, and invectives against his people. Thus *their own tongues shall fall upon them*, and their punishment shall be legible in their sin, as his was whose tongue was tormented in hell flames. Thus Antiochus and Herod consumed away.

2. They shall be dashed in pieces one against another, *ver. 13. A great tumult from the Lord shall be among them. But are tumults from the Lord, who is the God of order, and not of confusion?* As they are the sin of those that raise them, they are not from the Lord, but from the wicked one, and from men's own lusts, but as they are the punishment of those that suffer by them they are from the Lord, who serves his own purposes, and carries on his intentions by the sins and follies, and restless spirits of men. It is of themselves that they *bite and devour one another*; but it is of the Lord, the righteous judge, that thus they are *consumed one of another*, Gal. v. 15. as Ahab was deceived by a lying spirit from the Lord, so Abimelech and the men of Shechem were divided, and so destroyed by an evil spirit from the Lord, Judges ix. 23. Note, Those that are confederate and combined against the church will justly be separated, and set against one another; and their tumults raised against God will be avenged in tumults among themselves. And they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, to hold him from sinking, or to bind him as his prisoner, nay, his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour, to strike and wound him. Note, Those that aim to destroy the church are often made to destroy one another; and every man's sword is sometimes set against his fellow, by him whose sword they all are.

Some think this was fulfilled in the factions and dissensions that were among the Jews, when the Romans were destroying them all; for they had fought against the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel church, and to that well enough agrees, *ver. 19. Thou also, O Judah, shalt fight against Jerusalem*, i. e. the Jewish nation shall be ruined by itself, shall die by its own hands; the city and country shall be at war with each other, and so both shall be destroyed. *Suis & ipsa Roma viribusruit.*

3. The plunder of their camp shall greatly enrich the people of God, or the spoils of their country, *ver. 14. Judah also shall eat at Jerusalem*, so one learned interpreter reads it, people shall come from all parts to share in the prey; as when Sennacherib's army was routed before Jerusalem, there was the prey of a great spoil divided, Isa. xxxiii. 23. so it shall be now; the wealth of all the heathen round about that had spoiled Jerusalem shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance, that

an equal dividend may be made among all the parties entitled to a share of the prize. Note, The wealth of the sinner is often laid up for the just, and the Israel of God enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians.

4. The very cattle shall share in the plague with which the enemies of God's church shall be cut off; as they did in divers of the plagues of Egypt, *ver. 15. All the beasts that shall be in the tents of these wicked men*, when God comes to contend with them, shall perish with them. Not only beasts used in war as the horse, but those used for travel, or in the plough, as the mule, the camel, and the ass. Note, The inferior creatures often suffer for the sin of man, and in his plagues. Thus God will show his indignation against sin, and will make the creature that is thus *subject to vanity*, groan to be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 21, 22.

16. ¶ And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. 17. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. 18. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 19. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feasts of tabernacles. 20. ¶ In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. 21. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be Holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and feed therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

Three things are here foretold,

1. That a gospel way of worship being set up in the church, there shall be a great resort to it, and a general attendance upon it. Those that were left of the enemies of religion shall be so sensible of the mercy of God to men in their narrow escape, that they shall apply themselves to the worship of the God of Israel, and pay their homage to him, *ver. 16.* Those that were not consumed shall be converted, and this makes their deliverance a mercy indeed, a double mercy; it is a great change that the grace of God makes upon them: they that had come against Jerusalem finding their attempts vain and fruitless, shall become as much her admirers as ever they had been her adversaries, and shall come to Jerusalem to worship there, and go in concurrence with those whom they had gone contrary to. Note, Christ's foes as some of them shall be made his footstool, so others of them shall be made his friends; and when the principle of enmity is slain in them their former acts of hostility are pardoned to them, and their services are admitted and accepted, as though they had never fought against Jerusalem. They shall go up to worship at Jerusalem, because that was the place that God had chosen, and there the temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation. Converting grace sets us right, (1.) In the object of our worship. They shall no longer worship the Molochs and Baals, the kings and lords that the Gentiles worship, the creature of their own imagination, but the King, the Lord of hosts, the everlasting King, the King of kings, the sovereign Lord of all. (2.) In the ordinances of worship, those which God himself hath appointed. Gospel worship is here represented by the keeping of the feasts of tabernacles, for the sake of those two great graces which were in a special manner aided and signified in that feast, contempt of the world, and joy in God, Neh. viii. 17. The life of a good Christian is a constant feast of tabernacles, and in all acts of devotion we must retire from the world, and rejoice in the Lord; worship as in that feast. (3.) In the mediator of our worship; we must go to Christ our temple with all our offerings; for in him only our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God, 1 Pet. ii. 5. If we rest in ourselves, we come short of pleasing God, we must go up to him, and mention his righteousness only. (4.) In the time of it, we must be constant. They shall go up from year to year, at the times appointed for this solemn feast. Every day of a Christian's life is a day of the feast of tabernacles, and every Lord's day especially that is the great day of the feast, and therefore every day we must worship the Lord of hosts, and every Lord's day with a peculiar solemnity.

2. That those who neglect the duties of gospel-worship shall be reckoned with for their neglect. God will compel them to come and worship before him, by suspending his favours from those that keep not his ordinances; upon them there shall be no rain, *ver. 17.* Some understand it figuratively; the rain of heavenly doctrine shall be withheld, and of the heavenly grace which should accompany that doctrine. God will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon them. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to withhold the blessings of grace from those that do not attend the means of grace; to deny the green pastures to those that attend not the shepherd's tents. Or we may take it literally, on them there shall be no rain to make their ground fruitful. Note, The gifts of common providence are justly denied to those that neglect and despise instituted ordinances. Those that neglected to build the temple were punished with the want of rain, Hag. ii. 17. and so were they that neglected to attend there when it was built. If we be barren and unfruitful towards God, justly is the earth made so to us. Many are crossed and go backward in their affairs, and this is at the bottom of it, they do not keep close to the worship of God as they should; they go off from God, and then he walks contrary to them. If we omit or postpone the duties he expects from us, it is just with him to deny the favours we expect from him.

But what shall be done to the defaulters of the land of Egypt, to whom the threatening of the want of rain is no threatening, for they have no rain at any time, they need none, they desire none; the river Nile is to them instead of the clouds of heaven, waters their land and makes it fruitful, so that what is a punishment to others is none to them; *ver. 18-19.* It is threatened that if the family of Egypt go not up that have no rain, yet God will find out a way to meet with them, for there shall be in effect the same plague wherewith other nations are smitten for their neglect. God can and often did restrain the overflowing of the river, which was equivalent to the shutting up of the clouds, or if the river did its part, and rose



as high as it used to do, God had other ways of bringing famine upon them, and destroying the fruits of their ground, as he did by divers of the ten plagues of Egypt, so that *this*, i. e. the same shall be the punishment of Egypt that is the punishment of other nations, who come not up to keep the feasts of tabernacles. Note, Those who think themselves least indebted to, and depending on the mercy of heaven, yet cannot therefore think themselves guarded against the justice of heaven. Those that can live without rain, it doth not therefore follow they can live without God; for not the heavens only, but all other creatures are that to us (and no more) that God makes them to be; nor can any man's way of living enable him to set light by the judgments of God. This shall be the punishment, (margin) *This shall be the sin of Egypt, and the sin of all nations, that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.* The same word signifies both *sin* and the punishment of sin, so close and inseparable is the connection between them; as Gen. iv. 7. and sin is often its own punishment. Note, Omissions are sins, and we must come into judgment for them: those contract guilt that go not up to worship at the times appointed, as they have opportunity, and it is a sin that is its own punishment: for those who forsake the duty forfeit the privilege of communion with God.

3. That those who perform the duties of gospel worship shall have grace to adorn their profession by the duties of a gospel conversation too. This is premised, ver. 20, 21. and it is necessary to the completing of the beauty and happiness of the church. In general, all shall be holiness to the Lord. (1.) The name and character of holiness shall not be so confined as it had been; holiness of the Lord had been written only upon the high-priests forehead, but now it shall not be so appropriated. All Christians shall be living temples and spiritual priests, dedicated to the honour of God, and employed in his service. (2.) Real holiness shall be more diffused than it had been; because there shall be more powerful means of sanctification, more excellent rules, more cogent arguments and brighter patterns of holiness, and because there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of holiness and sanctification after Christ's ascension than ever before.

1. There shall be holiness introduced into common things; and those things devoted to God that seemed very foreign.

(1.) The furniture of their houses shall be consecrated to God. Upon the bells of the horses shall be engraven Holiness to the Lord, or upon the bridles of the horses, so the margin, or the trappings. The horses used in war shall no longer be used against God and his people as they have been, but for him and them. Even their wars shall be holy wars; their troopers serving under God's banner. Their great men that ride in state with a pompous retinue shall reckon it their greatest ornament to honour God with their honours; holiness to the Lord shall be written on the harness of their chariot-horses, as great men have sometimes their coat of arms with their motto painted on their coaches; every gentleman shall take the high-priest's motto for his, and glory in it, and make it a memento to himself not to do any thing unworthy of it. Travellers shall have it upon their bridles with which they guide their horses, as those that desire always to be put in mind of it, by having it continually before them, and to guide themselves in all their motions by this rule. The bells of the horses which are designed to quicken them in their journey, and to give notice of their approach, shall have Holiness to the Lord upon them, to signify that this is that we ought to be influenced by ourselves, and make profession of to others, wherever we go.

(2.) The furniture of their houses too shall be consecrated to God, to be employed in his service. (1.) The furniture of the priests' houses, or apart-

ments adjoining to the house of the Lord. The common drinking cups they used shall be like the bowls before the altar, that were used either to receive the blood of the sacrifices, or to present the wine and oil in, which were for the drink-offerings. The vessels which they used at their own tables shall be used in such a religious manner, with such sobriety and temperance, such devotedness to the glory of God, and such a mixture of pious thoughts and expressions, that their meals shall look like sacrifices: they shall not eat and drink to themselves, but to him that spreads their tables and fills their cups. And thus, in ministers families especially, should common actions be done after a godly sort, however they are done in other families. (2.) The furniture of other houses, those of the common people. Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord. The pots in which they boiled their meat, the cups out of which they drank their wine, Jer. xxxv. 5. In these God's good creatures shall never be abused to excess, nor that made the food and fuel of lust, which should have been oil to the wheels of obedience, as had formerly been, when all tables were full of vomit and filthiness, Isa. xxviii. 8. What they eat and drink out of, these shall nourish their bodies for the service of God; and out of these they shall give liberally for the relief of the poor; then are they Holiness to the Lord, as the merchandise and the hire of the converted Tyrians are said to be, Isa. xxiii. 18. for both in our gettings and in our spendings we must have an eye to the will of God as our rule, and the glory of God as our end. (3.) When there shall be such an abundance of real holiness, people shall not be nice and curious about ceremonial holiness. They that sacrifice shall come and take of these common vessels, and seethe their sacrifices therein, making no distinction between them and the bowls before the altar. In gospel-times the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth, and neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, John iv. 21. One place shall be as acceptable to God as another, I will that men pray every where; and one vessel as acceptable as another. Little regard shall be had to the circumstance, provided there be nothing indecent or disorderly, while the substance is religiously preserved and adhered to. Some think it intimates that there should be greater numbers of sacrifices offered than the vessels of the sanctuary would serve for; but rather than any should be turned back or deferred, they shall make no difficulty at all of using common vessels, as the Levites in a case of necessity helped the priests to kill the sacrifices, 2 Chron. xxix. 31.

There shall be no unholiness introduced into their sacred things, to corrupt them. In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts. Some read it, there shall be no more the merchant, for so a Canaanite sometimes signifies; and they think it was fulfilled when Christ once and again drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Or though those that were Canaanites, strangers and foreigners, shall be brought into the house of the Lord, yet they shall cease to be Canaanites; they shall have nothing of the spirit or disposition of Canaanites in them. Or it intimates, that though in gospel-times people shall grow indifferent as to holy vessels, yet they should be very strict in church-discipline, and careful not to admit the profane to special ordinances, but to separate between the precious and the vile, between Israelites and Canaanites. Yet this will not have its full accomplishment short of the heavenly Jerusalem, that house of the Lord of hosts into which no unclean thing shall enter; for at the end of time, and not before, Christ shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends; and the tares and wheat shall be perfectly and eternally separated.

## THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH.

# AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, Upon the Book of the PROPHET MALACHI.

God's prophets were his witnesses to his church, each in their day, for several ages: witnesses for him and his authority, witnesses against sin and sinners, attesting the true intents of God's providences in his dealings with his people then, and the kind intentions of his grace concerning his church in the days of the Messiah, to whom all the prophets bear witness for they all agreed in their testimony; and now we have only one witness more to call, and we have done with our evidence; and though he be the last, and in him prophecy ceased, yet the Spirit of prophecy shines as clear, as strong, as bright in him, as in any that went before; and his testimony challengeth an equal regard. The Jews say prophecy continued forty years under the second temple, and this prophet they call the seal of prophecy, because in him the series or succession of prophets broke off and came to a period; God wisely ordered it, that divine inspiration should cease for some ages before the coming of the Messiah, that that great prophet might appear the more conspicuous and distinguishable, and be the more welcome. Let us consider, (1.) The person of the prophet; we have only his name, Malachi, and no account of his country or parentage. Malachi signifies my angel; which has given occasion for a conjecture that this prophet was indeed an angel from heaven, and not a man; as that, Judges ii. 1. But there is no just ground for the conjecture: Prophets were messengers, God's messengers; this prophet was so; his name is the very same with that which we find in the original, chap. iii. 1. for my messenger, and perhaps from that word he might (though probably he had another name) be called Malachi. The Chaldee paraphrase, and some of the Jews suggest that Malachi was the same with Ezra, but that also is groundless, Ezra was a scribe, but we never read that he was prophet. Others, yet further from probability, make him to be Mordecai. But we have reason to conclude he was a person whose proper name was that by which he is here called: the tradition of some of the ancients is, that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, and that he died young. (2.) The scope of the prophecy Haggai and Zechariah were sent to reprove the people for delaying to build the temple: Malachi was sent to reprove them for the neglect of it, when it was built, and for their profanation of the temple-service; for from idolatry and superstition they run into the other extreme of impiety and irreligion: and the sins he witnesseth against are the same that we find complained of in Nehemiah's time, with whom, it is probable, he was cotemporary. And now prophecy was to cease, he speaks more clearly of the Messiah as nigh at hand, than any other of the prophets had done: and concludes with a direction to the people of God to keep in remembrance the law of Moses, while they were in expectation of the gospel of Christ.



## CHAP. I.

*This prophet is sent, first to convince, and then to comfort. first to discover sin, and to reprove for that, and then to promise the coming of him who shall take away sin: and this method the blessed Spirit takes in dealing with souls, John xvi. 8. He first opens the wound, and then applies the healing balm. God had provided (and one would think effectually) for the engaging of Israel to himself by providences and ordinances; but it seems by the complaints here made of them they received the grace of God in both these in vain. (1.) They were very ungrateful to God for his favours to them, and rendered not again according to the benefit they received, ver. 1-5. (2.) They were very careless and remiss in the observance of his institutions; the priests especially were so, that were in a particular manner charged with them, ver. 6-14. And what shall we say of those whom neither providences nor ordinances work upon? and who affront God in those very things wherein they should honour him?*

1. **THE** burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi, 2. I have loved you, saith the LORD: yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, 3. And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste, for the dragons of the wilderness. 4. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places: thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and the people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. 5. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

The prophecy of this book is intitled, *The burden of the word of the Lord*, ver. 1. which intimates, (1.) That it was of great weight and importance; what the false prophets said was light as *the chaff*, what the true prophets said was ponderous as *the wheat*, Jer. xxiii. 28. (2.) That it ought to be often repeated to them and by them, as the *burden of a song*. (3.) That there were those to whom it was a *burden*, and a *reproach*, they were weary of it, and found themselves so aggrieved by it, that they were *not able to bear it*. (4.) That to them it would prove a burden indeed, to sink them to the lowest hell, unless they repented. (5.) That to those who loved it and embraced it, and bid it welcome, though it was a *light burden*, as our Saviour calls it, *Matth. xi. 30.* yet it was a *burden*. This *burden of the word of the Lord* was sent, (1.) To Israel, for to them pertained the lively oracles of prophecy, as well as those of the written word. Many prophets God had sent to Israel and now he will try them with one more. (2.) By Malachi; by the hand of Malachi; as if it were not a message by word of mouth, but a letter put into *his hand*, for the greater certainty.

In these verses they are charged with ingratitude in that they were not duly sensible of God's distinguishing goodness to them; and such a charge as this may well be called a *burden*, for it is a *heavy one*.

1. God asserts the great kindness he had and had often expressed for them, ver. 2. *I have loved you, saith the Lord*. Thus abruptly doth the sermon begin, as if God intended, whatever reproofs should be given them, to reconcile them to his love, and to take care that they should still have good thoughts of him: *as many as I love I rebuke and chasten*. Thus kindly doth the sermon begin; God will have his people satisfied that he *loves them*, and is ever mindful of his love. This is the same with what he said of old to the virgin of Israel that he might engage her affections to himself, Jer. xxxi. 3, 4. *Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love*. In this one word God sums up all his gracious dealings with them; love was the spring of all; he loved them because he would *love them*, Dent. vii. 7, 8. loved them in their childhood, *Hos. xi. 1.* His *delight was in them*, Isa. lxii. 4. *I have loved you*, but you have not loved me, nor made any suitable returns for my love. Note, God's people need to be often mused of his love to them.

2. They *question his love*, and diminish the instances of it, and seem to quarrel with him, for telling them of it: *Yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us?* As God runs up all his favours to them to the fountain, which was *his love*, so he runs up all their sins against him to the fountain, which was *their contempt of his love*. Instead of acknowledging his kindness, and studying what they shall render, they *scorn to own* that they had been beholden to him; *challenge him* to produce proofs of his love that were material, and think and speak very slightly of the instances they had had of his kindness, as if they were so *few*, so *small*, as not to be worth taking notice of; and no more than what they had sufficiently made returns for, or a least than he had sufficiently balanced with instances of his wrath. Have we not been wasted, impoverished, and carried captive, and wherein then *hast thou loved us?* Note, God justly takes it very ill to have his favour slighted, as not worth speaking of; and it is very absurd for us to ask *wherein he has loved us*, when, which way soever we look, we meet with the proofs and instances of his love to us.

3. He makes it out beyond contradiction that he had loved them, loved them in a *distinguishing* way, which was in a special manner *obliging*. For proof of this he shews the difference he had made and would still make between Jacob and Esau, between Israelites and Edomites. Some read their question, *Wherefore hast thou loved us?* as if they did indeed own that he had loved them; but withal insinuate, that there was a reason for it that he loved them; because their father Abraham had loved him, so that it was not a free love, but a love of debt: to which he replies, Was not Esau as near akin to Abraham as you are? was he not Jacob's own brother, his elder brother? And therefore if there were any right to a recompence for Abraham's love, Esau had it, and yet *I hated Esau, and loved Jacob*.

1. Let them see what a difference God had made between Jacob and Esau. Esau was Jacob's brother, his twin-brother; yet *I loved Jacob*, and *I hated Esau*, i. e. took Jacob into covenant, and entailed the blessing on him and his, but I refused and rejected Esau. Note, Those that are taken into covenant with God, that have the lively oracles, and the means of grace committed to them, have reason to look upon these as tokens of his love. Jacob is *loved*, for he hath these, Esau hated, for he has not. The apostle quotes this, *Rom. ix. 13.* and compares it with that the oracle said to Rebecca, concerning her twins, *Gen. xxv. 23.* *The elder shall serve the younger*, to illustrate the doctrine of God's sovereignty in dispensing his favours; for may he not do what he will with his own? Esau was justly *hated*, but Jacob freely *loved*; even so, Father, because *I seemed good in thine eyes*, and it is not for us to ask why or wherefore.

2. Let them see what he was now doing and would do with them, pursuant to this original difference.

1. The Edomites shall be made the monuments of God's justice, and he will be glorified in their utter destruction, for Esau have I hated. *I laid his mountain waste*, the mountain of Seir, which was his *heritage*. When all that part of the world was ravaged by the Chaldean army, the country of Edom was among the rest laid in ruins, and became a habitation for the dragons of the wilderness, so perfectly desolate was it; as was foretold, *Isa. xxxiv. 6-11.* The Edomites had triumphed in Jerusalem's overthrow, *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* and therefore it was just with God to put the same cup of trembling into their hands. And though Edom's ruins were *last*, yet they were *lasting*, and the desolation *perpetual*, and in this the difference was made between Jacob and Esau, and is made between the righteous and the wicked, to whom otherwise *all things come alike*, and there seems to be *one event*. Jacob's cities were laid waste, but they are *rebuilt*, Edom's are laid waste, and *never rebuilt*; the sufferings of the righteous will have an *end*, and will *end well*, all their grievances will be redressed, and their sorrow turned into joy; but the sufferings of the wicked will be *endless* and *remediless*, as Edom's desolations, ver. 4. Observe here, (1.) The vain hopes of the Edomites, that they shall have their ruins repaired as well as Israel, though they had no promise to build their hope upon. They say, it is true *we are impoverished*, it is the common chance, and there is no remedy, but *we will return and build the desolate places*, we are resolved we will, not so much as asking God's leave; *we will*, whether he will or no; nay, we will do it in defiance of God's curse, and that sentence pronounced upon Edom, *Isa. xxxiv. 10.* *From generation to generation it shall lie waste*. They build presumptuously as Hiel built Jericho in direct contradiction to the word of God, *1 Kings xvi. 34.* and it shall speed accordingly. Note, It is common for those whose hearts are unhumiliated under humbling providences, to think to make their part good against God himself, and to *build and plant*, and flourish again as much as ever, though God hath said they shall be *impoverished*. But see, (2.) The dashing of these hopes, and the disappointment of them. They say, *We will build*, but what saith the Lord of hosts? for we are sure his word shall stand and not theirs: and he saith, (1.) Their attempts shall be baffled; *they shall build, but I will throw down*. Note, Those that walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to them, for *who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered?* When the Jews had rejected Christ and his gospel, they became Edomites, and this word was fulfilled in them, for when in the time of the emperor Adrian they attempted to rebuild Jerusalem, God by earthquakes and eruptions of fire threw down what they built, so that they were forced to quit the enterprise. (2.) They shall be looked upon by all as abandoned to utter ruin; all that see them shall call them the *border of wickedness*, a *filthy nation*, incurably so, and therefore *the people against whom the Lord is indignation for ever*. Since their wickedness is such as will never be reformed, their desolations shall be such as are never to be repaired. Against Israel God was a *little displeased*, *Zech. i. 15.* but against Edom he has *indignation*, and will have *for ever*, for they are the *people of his curse*, *Isa. xxxiv. 5.*

2. The Israelites shall be made the monuments of his mercy, and he will be glorified in their salvation, ver. 5. Edomites shall be stigmatised as a people hated of God, but your eyes shall see your doubts concerning his love to you for ever silenced; for you shall say, and have cause to say, *The Lord is, and will be magnified from the borders of Israel*, i. e. from every part and border of the land of Israel. The border of Edom is a *border of wickedness*, and therefore the Lord will have *indignation against them for ever*, but the border of Israel is a *border of holiness*, the border of the sanctuary, *Psal. lxxviii. 54.* and therefore God will make it to appear, though it may for a time lie desolate, yet he hath mercy in store for it, and from thence *he will be magnified*; he will give his people Israel both cause and hearts to praise him. When the border at Edom still remains desolate, and the border of Israel is repaired and replenished, then it will appear that God hath loved Jacob. Note, (1.) Those that doubt of God's love to his people, shall sooner or later have convincing and undeniable proofs given them of it; *your own eyes shall see* what ye will not believe. (2.) Deliverances out of trouble are to be reckoned proofs of God's good-will to his people, though they may be suffered to fall into trouble, *Psal. cxxxiv. 19.* (3.) Distinguishing favours are very obliging. If God rear up again the border of Israel, but leave the border of Edom in ruins, so no Israelites ask for them, *wherein hast thou loved us?* (4.) The *dignifying* of Israel is the *magnifying* of the God of Israel, and one way or other God will have honour from his professing people. (5.) God's goodness being his glory, when he doth us good we must speak him great, for that is *magnifying* him. It is an instance of his goodness that he hath *pleasure in the prosperity of his servants*, and for this they that love his salvation say, *The Lord be magnified*, *Psal. cxxxv. 27.*

6. **¶** A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: If then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? 7. Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. 8. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. 9. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts. 10. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. 11. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts. 12. ¶ But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. 13. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye



ye brought *that which was torn*, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hands? saith the LORD. 14. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the LORD a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

The prophet is here by a special commission calling the priests to account, though they were themselves appointed judges to call the people to an account. Let the rulers in the house of God know that there is one *above them*; who will reckon with them for their mal-administrations. Thus saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, ver. 6. God will have a saying to unfaithful ministers: and it concerns them who *speaking from God* to his people, to hear and heed what he saith to them; that they may *save themselves* in the first place, otherwise how should they help to *save them that hear them*. It is a severe and no doubt a just reproof, that is here given to the priests, for the profanation of the holy things of God, with which they were intrusted; and if this was the crime of the priests, we have reason to fear the people also were guilty of it; so that what is said to the priests, is said to all, nay, it is said to us, who as Christians profess ourselves not only the people of God, but priests to him. Observe here,

1. What it was that God expected from them, and with what good reason he expected it, ver. 6. *A son honoureth his father*, because he is his father, nature has written this law in the hearts of his children, before God wrote it at mount Sinai; nay a servant, though his obligation to his master be not natural, but by voluntary compact, yet thinks it his duty to honour him: to be observant of his orders, and true to his interests. Children and servants pay respect to their parents and masters; every one cries out shame on them if they do not, and their own hearts cannot but reproach them too; the order of families is thus kept up, and it is their beauty and advantage.

But the priests, that are God's children and his servants, do not fear and honour him. They were fathers and masters to the people, and expected to be called so, Judges xviii. 19. Matt. xxiii. 7-10. and to be revered and obeyed as such; but they forgot their Father and Master in heaven, and the duty they owe to him. We may each of us charge it upon ourselves what is here charged upon the priests. Note. (1.) We are every one of us to look upon God as our father and master, and upon ourselves as his children and servants. (2.) Our relation to God as our father and master, strongly obligeth us to fear and honour him. If we honour and fear the father of our flesh, much more the Father and Master of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9. (3.) It is a thing to be justly complained of and lamented, that God is so little feared and honoured, even by those that own him for their father and master. *Where is his honour? Where is his fear?*

3. What the contempt was which these priests put upon God.—This is that in general which is charged upon them. (1.) They *despised God's name*; their familiarity with it, as priests, bred contempt of it, and served them only to gain a veneration by it for themselves, and their own name, while God's name was of small account with them. God's name is *all that whereby he has made himself known*, his word and ordinances; these they had low thoughts of, and vilified that which it was their business of magnifying; and no wonder that when despised it themselves, they did that which made it despicable to others: even the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred; as Eli's sons did. (2.) They *profaned God's name*, ver. 12. They *polluted it*, ver. 7. They not only made no account of sacred things, but they made an ill use of them, and perverted them to the service of the worst and vilest purposes, their own pride, covetousness and luxury. There cannot be a greater provocation to God than the profanation of his name: for it is *holy and reverend*. His purity cannot be polluted by us, for he is unspotted, but his name may be profaned; and nothing profanes it more than the miscarriages of priests, whose business it is to do honour to it.

This is the general charge exhibited against them; to this they plead not guilty, and challenge God to prove it upon them, and to make good the charge; which added daring impudence to their daring impiety; he says *wherein have we despised thy name?* ver. 7. and *wherein have we polluted thee?* ver. 9. It is common with proud sinners, when they are reprov'd, to stand thus upon their own justification; these priests had most horribly profaned sacred things, and yet, like the *adulterous woman*, say they have *done no wickedness*; either they were so *inobservant of themselves*, that they remembered not, or reflected not upon their own acts; or so *ignorant of the divine law*, that they thought there was no harm in them, and that what they did could not be construed *despising God's name*; or so *atheistical* as to imagine, that though they knew their own guilt, yet God did not; or so *scornful* in their carriage towards God and his prophets, that they took a pride in bantering a serious and just reproof, and turning it off with a jest. They either *laugh at* the reproof, as those that despise it, and harden their hearts against it; or *laugh it off*, as those that resolve they will not be touched by it, or not seem to be so. Which way soever we take it, their defence was their offence, and in justifying themselves, their own tongues condemned them, and their saying *wherein have we despised thy name?* prov'd them proud and perverse; Had they asked this question with a humble desire to be told more particularly wherein they had offended, it had been an evidence of their repentance, and had given hopes of their reformation; but to ask it thus in disdain and defiance of the word of God, argues their hearts fully set in them to do evil. Note, Sinners ruin themselves by studying to baffle their own convictions; but they will find it hard to kick against the pricks.

Justly might they have been convicted and condemned upon the general charge, and their plea thrown out as frivolous, but God will not only overcome, but will be clear, will be justified when he judgeth, and therefore he shews them very particularly wherein they had despised his name, and what the contempt was they cast upon him. As formerly when he charged them with idolatry, so now, when he chargeth them with profaneness, he bids them see their way in the valley, and know what they have done, Jer. ii. 25.

1. They despised God's name in what they said; in the low opinion they had of his institutions; ye say in your hearts, and perhaps speak it out when your priests get together over your cups, out of the hearing of the people, *the table of the Lord is contemptible*, ver. 7. again, ver. 12. ye say, *the table of the Lord is polluted*, it is to be no more regarded than any other table; either the table in the temple, on which the *shew-bread* was placed, is that which they reflect upon, not understanding the mystery of it, they despised it as an insignificant thing; or rather the altar of burnt-offerings is here called *the table*, for there God and his priests and his people did, as it were, feast together upon the sacrifices, in token of friendship; this they thought was *contemptible*; formerly in the days of superstition it was thought *contemptible*, in comparison with the *idolatrious altars* that the heathen had, and was set aside to make room for a new-fashioned one, 2 Kings xvi. 14, 15. Now it is thought *contemptible* in comparison with their own tables, and those of the great men, *the fruit thereof, even his meat is contemptible*. They who served at the altar, were to

live upon the altar, but they complained they lived poorly and meanly, and it was not worth while to attend the service of the altar, for the *fruits and meat* of it, for it was very ordinary, and always the same again; they had no dainties, no varieties, no nice dishes. Nay, that part of the sacrifices which was given to God, the *blood* and the *fat*, they looked upon with contempt, as not worthy so many laws God had made about them: they asked what need so much ado about burning the fat, and pouring out the blood? Note, Those greatly profane and pollute God's name, that despise the business of religion though it be very honourable, as not worth *taking pains in*, and the advantages of religion, though highly valuable, as not worth *taking pains for*. Those that live in a careless neglect of holy ordinances, that come to them, and attend on them irreverently, and go away from them never the better, and under no concern, they do in effect say, *the table of the Lord is contemptible*, there is neither virtue nor value in it; neither credit nor comfort from it.

2. They despised God's name in what they did, which was of a piece with of what they said, and flowed from it; corrupt principles and notions are roots of bitterness, which bear the gall and wormwood of corrupt practices. They looked upon the table and altar of the Lord as *contemptible*, and then,

1. They thought any thing would serve for a sacrifice, though never so coarse and mean; and were so far from bringing the best, as they ought to have done, that they picked out the worst they had, which was fit neither for the market, nor for their own tables, and offered that at God's altar. With every sacrifice they were to bring a meat-offering of *fine flour mingled with oil*; but they brought *polluted bread*, ver. 7. coarse bread, served as bread, perhaps it was dry and mouldy, or made of the refuse of the wheat, which they thought good enough to be burnt upon the altar; for what it been better they would have said, *to what purpose is this?* And as to the beasts they offered, though the law was express, that what was offered in sacrifice should not have blemish, yet they brought *the blind*, and *the lame*, and *the sick*, ver. 5. and again, ver. 13. *the ear of the dumb, and the sick*, that was ready to die of it. They looked not farther than the blemish of the sacrifice, and they pleaded it was fit to be burnt, if it was good for any thing else. The people were so far convinced of their iniquity, that they would bring sacrifices; they durst not wholly omit the duty, but they brought *rain oblations*, matted God and devalued them even by bringing the worst they had; and the priests, who should have taught them better, *accepted the gifts* brought to the altar, and offered them up there, because, if they should refuse them, the people would bring none at all, and then they would lose their perquisites; and therefore having more regard to their own profit than to God's honour, they accepted that which they knew he would not accept of. Some make ver. 8. to be a continuation of what the priests profanely said, ver. 7. *Ye say to the people, if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? or the lame and the sick is it not evil?* Note, It is a very evil thing, whether men like it or not, to offer the blind in the temple, *the dumb and the sick*, in sacrifice to God. If we worship God *ignorantly* and without understanding, we bring the *blind* for sacrifice; if we do it *carelessly* and without consideration, if we are cold and dull, and dead in it, we bring the *sick*; if we rest in the *holliness exercise*, and do not make the best work of it, we bring the *lame*; and if we suffer vain thoughts and distractions to lodge within us, we bring the *torn*. And is not this evil? Is not a great affront to God, and a great wrong and injury to our own souls? Do not our books tell us, nay, do not our hearts tell us, that *this is evil*? For God will be the best, ought to be served with the best we have.

2. They would do no more of their work but what they were paid for. The priests would offer the sacrifices that were brought to the altar, because they had their share of them, but as for any other service of the temple, that had not a particular fee belonging to it, they would not stir a step, or lend a hand to it; and this was the general temper of them, ver. 10. There is not a man among the priests that would *shut the doors*, or *kindle a fire for naught*. If we were bid to do the smallest piece of service, he would ask, How shall I be paid for it? They would do nothing gratis, but were all for what they could get, *every one for his gain, from his quarter*, Isa. lvi. 11. Note, Though God has given order that his servants be well paid in this world, yet those are not acceptable servants to him that are mercenary, and would never do the work but for one wages.

3. Their work was a perfect drudgery to them, ver. 13. *Ye said also Behold, what a weariness is it?* Both priests and people were of this mind, that they thought God imposed too hard a task upon them; the people grudged the charge of providing the sacrifice and the priests, grudged the pains of offering it; they thought the feasts of the Lord came too thick, and they were forced to attend too often, and too long in the courts of the Lord: the priests thought it a severe penance imposed upon them, to purify themselves as was required when they attended the altar, and eat of the holy things; they thought the duty of their office tedious and troublesome, and snuffed at it as unreasonable, and bearing hard upon them; they did it, but it was grudgingly, and with reluctance. God speaks of it in justification of his law, that he had not made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense, Isa. xlii. 23. *Wherein have I wearied thee?* Micah vi. 3. But their own wicked hearts made it a weariness; and they were as *Doeg, detained before the Lord*, they would rather have been any where else. Note, Those are highly injurious, both to God and themselves, that are weary of his service and worship, and snuff at it.

3. Observe how God expostulates and reasons the case with them, for their conviction and humiliation. (1.) Would they, durst they affront an earthly prince thus? You offer to God *the lame and the sick*, offer it now unto the governor, ver. 8. either as tribute, or as a present, when thou art intrusting his favour, or in gratitude for some favour received, *will he be pleased with thee?* or rather will he not take himself to be affronted by it? Note, Those that are careless and irreverent in the duties of religious worship, should consider what a shame it is to offer that to their God, which they would scorn to offer to their governor, and to be more observant of the laws of breeding and good manners, than of the laws of religion; and more afraid of being rude, than of being profane.

(2.) Could they imagine that such sacrifices as these would be pleasing to God, or answer the end of sacrifices? Should I accept this of your hands, saith the Lord? ver. 10. have you any reason to think I should either not discern or not resent the affront? that I should connive at the violation of my own laws? No, ver. 10. *I have no pleasure in you*, and therefore *I will not accept an offering*, such an offering at your hand. If God has no pleasure in the person, if he be not in a justified state, if he be not sanctified, he will not accept the offering; God had respect to Abel first, and then to his sacrifice. Note, In order to our acceptance with God, it is not enough to do that which for the matter of it is good, but we must do it from a right principle, in a right manner, and for a right end. It was the ancient rule laid down, Gen. iv. 7. *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?* Now if we be not accepted of God, in vain do we worship him; it is all lost labour: nay, we are all undone, for ever undone, if we come short of God's acceptance; those therefore make an ill bargain for themselves, that to save charges in their religion miss all the ends of it; and by thinking to go the nearest way to work bring nothing to pass. Those who make it the top of their ambition, as we all ought to do, whether



ther present or absent, to be accepted of the Lord, will not dare to bring the torn and the lame, and the sick for sacrifices.

(3.) How could they expect to prevail with God in their intercessions for the people when they thus affronted God in their sacrifices? So some understand, ver. 9. as spoken ironically, and now if you will do the duty of priests, and stand in the gap, to turn away the judgments of God, that you see ready to pour in upon us, I pray you beseech God that he will be gracious to us and to our land, which is almost eaten up with locusts and caterpillars, as appears chap. iii. 11. Try now what interest you have at the throne of grace, improve it for the removing of this plague, for it has been by your means, you have provoked God to send it, but as you go on thus to profane his sacred things, will he regard your persons or your prayers? No, you cannot prevail with him to command it away. For if we regard iniquity in our hearts, God will not hear us, either for ourselves or others.

(4.) Had God deserved this at their hands? No, he had provided comfortably for them, and had given them such encouragement in their work, as might have engaged them to do it cheerfully and well, so some understand, ver. 10. Who is there among you that shut a door, or kindle a fire for nought? No, God doth not expect you should serve him for nothing, you are well paid for it, and shall be so; not a cup of cold water, given for the honour of God, shall lose its reward. Note, The consideration of our constant receivings from God and the present rewards of obedience in obedience, very much aggravates our slothfulness and niggardiness in our returns of duty to God.

4. He calls them to repentance for their profanations of his holy name. So we may understand ver. 9. Now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us. Humble yourselves for your sin, cry mightily to God for pardon, and make up in the faith and fervency of your prayers what have been wanting in the worth and value of your sacrifices; for all the rebukes of providence we are under, are by your means. Note, Those that have by their sins helped to kindle a fire, are highly concerned by their repentance, prayers, and personal reformation, to help to quench it. We must see how much God's judgments are by your means, and be awakened thereby to be earnest with him to return in mercy; and if we take not this course, how can we think he should regard our persons?

5. He declares his resolution, both to secure the glory of his own name and to reckon with those that do profane it. Those that put contempt upon God and religion, and think to run down sacred things, let them know,

1. That they shall not gain their point; God will magnify his law, and make it honourable, though they vilify it, and make it contemptible; for ver. 11, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles. It might be said, if these be not the worshippers whom God will accept, then he has no worshippers; as if he must make the best of their service, or else he would have no service done him; and then what will he do for his great name? But let him alone for that, though Israel be not faithful, be not gathered, yet God will be glorious; though these priests provoke him to take down the ceremonial economy, and to abolish that law of commandments, which could not make the comers thereunto perfect, yet he will be no loser by that at the long run; for (1.) Instead of those carnal ordinances which they profaned, a spiritual way of worship shall be introduced and established; incense shall be offered to God's name, which signifies prayer and praise, Psal. cxli. 2. Rev. viii. 3. fering, of the blood and fat of bulls and goats. And it shall be a pure offering, instead of the carnal ordinances, imposed till the time of reformation, Heb. ix. 10. When the hour came, in which the true worshippers worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth; then this incense was offered, even this pure offering. (2.) Instead of his being worshipped and served among the Jews only a small people in a corner of the world, he will be served and worshipped in all places, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, in every place, in every part of the world, incense shall be offered to his name; nations shall be disciples, and shall speak of the wonderful works of God, and have them spoken to them in their own language. This is a plain prediction of that great revolution in the kingdom of grace, by which the Gentiles that had been strangers and foreigners, came to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and as welcome to the throne of grace as ever the Jews had been. It was twice said, for the thing was certain, My name shall be great among the Gentiles, whereas hitherto in Judah only he was known, and his name great, Psal. lxxvi. 1. God's name shall be declared to them, the declaration of it shall be received and believed, and there shall be those among the Gentiles that shall magnify and glorify the name of God, better than ever the Jews had done, even the priests themselves.

2. That they shall not go unpunished, ver. 4. Here is the doom of those that do like these priests here, for the sentence on them is a sentence on all such. Observe, (1.) The description of profane and careless worshippers.

They are such as *vow and sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt thing*, when they have in their flock a male; they have of the best, wherewith to serve and honour him: so bountiful has he been in his gifts to them, but they put him off with the worst, and think that good enough for him; so ungrateful are they in their returns to him. This was the fault of the people, but the priests connived at it, and indulged them in it. We find a distinction in the law which allowed that to be offered for a free-will offering, which should not be accepted for a vow, Lev. xxii. 23. But the priests would accept, it though God would not, pretending to be more indulgent than he was, for which he will give them no thanks another day. (2.) The character given of such worshippers: they are *deceivers*, they deal falsely and fraudulently with God, they play the hypocrite with him; they pretend to honour him in making the vow, but when it comes to be performed, they put an affront upon him, to that degree, that it had been better not to have vowed, than to vow and thus to pay, but let not such be themselves deceived, for God is not mocked; those that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove in the end to have put a damning cheat upon their own souls. Hypocrites are *deceivers*, and they will prove *self-deceivers*, and so *self-destroyers*. (3.) The doom passed upon them, they are *cursed*; they expect a blessing, but will meet with a curse, the tokens of God's wrath according to the judgment written. (4.) The reason of this doom; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and therefore will reckon with those that deal with me, but as a man like themselves; my name is dreadful among the heathen, and therefore I will not bear that it should be contemptible among mine own people. The heathen paid more respect to their gods, though idols, than the Jews did to theirs, though the only true living God. Note, The consideration of God's universal dominion, and the universal acknowledgment of it, should restrain us from all irreverence in his service.

### C H A P. II.

There are two great ordinances which divine wisdom hath instituted, the wretched profanation of both which is complained of, and sharply

reproved in this chapter, (1.) The ordinances of the ministry, which is peculiar to the church, and is designed for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned by those that were themselves dignified with the honour of it, and intrusted with the business of it. The priests profaned the holy things of God, this they are here charged with, their sin is aggravated, and they are severely threatened for it, ver. 1—9. (2.) The ordinance of marriage, which is common to the world of mankind, and was instituted for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned both by the priests and by the people, in marrying strangers, ver. 10—12. treating their wives unkindly, ver. 13. putting them away, ver. 16. and herein dealing treacherously, ver. 10—14, 15. And that which was at the bottom of this, and other instances of profaneness, was downright atheism, thinking God altogether such a one as themselves, which was in effect to say, there is no God, ver. 17. And these reproofs to them are warnings to us.

1. **A**ND now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. 2. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. 3. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts, and one shall take you away with it. 4. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 5. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. 6. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. 7. For the priests lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 8. But ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 9. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

What was said in the foregoing chapter, was directed to the priests, chap. i. 6. Thus saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, that despise my name; but the crimes there charged upon them they were guilty of, as *sacrificers*, and for those they might think it some excuse, that they offered what the people brought, and if they were not so good as they should be, it was not their fault but the people's; And therefore here the corruptions there complained of are traced to the source and spring of them, the faults the priests were guilty of, as *teachers* of the people, as *expositors* of the law, and the lively oracles; and this is a part of their office, which still remains in the hands of gospel ministers, who are appointed to be pastors and teachers, like the priests under the law, though not *sacrificers* like them; and therefore by them the admonition here is to be particularly regarded. If the priests had given the people better instructions, the people would have brought better offerings; and therefore the blame returns upon the priests; and now, O ye priests, this commandment is purely for you, ver. 1. who should have taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord, and how to worship him aright. Note, The governors of the churches are under God's government, and to him they are accountable. Even for them that command, God hath commandments. Nay, ver. 4. ye shall know that I have sent these commandments for you; shall know it either, (1.) By the power of the Spirit working with the word for their conviction and reformation; you shall know its original, by its efficacy whence it comes, by what it doth. When the word of God to us brings about, and carries on the work of God in us, then we cannot but know that he sent it to us; that it is not the word of Malachi God's messenger, but it is indeed the word of God, and is sent not only in general to all, but in particular to us. Or, (2.) By the accomplishment of the threatnings denounced against them; ye shall know, to your cost, that I have sent this commandment to you, for it shall not return void.

Let us now see what this commandment is, that is, for the priests, which they must know was sent to them, and put into method the particulars of the charge.

1. Here is a recital of the covenant God made with that sacred tribe; which was their commission for their work, and the patent of their honour. The Lord of hosts sent a commandment to them, for the establishing of this covenant, (ver. 4.) for his covenant is said to be the word which he commanded, Psal. cv. 8. And he sent this commandment by the prophet at this time, for the re-establishing of it, that it might not be cut off for their persisting in the violation of it. Let the sons of Levi know then (and particularly the sons of Aaron) what honour God put upon their family, and what a trust he reposed in them. Ver. 5. My covenant was with him of life and peace. Besides the covenant of peculiarity made with all the house of Israel, there was a covenant of priesthood made with one family, that they should do the services, and upon condition of that should enjoy all the privileges of the priest's office. That as Israel was a peculiar nation, a kingdom of priests, so the house of Aaron should be a family of priests, set apart for the service and honour of God, to bear up his name in that nation, as they were to bear up his name among the nations, both the one and the other in different degrees, were to give glory unto God's name, ver. 2. God covenanted with them as his menial servants, obliging them to do his work, and promised to own and accept them in it. This is called his covenant of life and peace, because it was intended for the support of religion, which brings life and peace to the souls of men; life to the dead, peace to the distressed, or because life and peace were by this covenant promised to those priests that faithfully and conscientiously discharged their duty, they shall have peace, which speaks security from all evil, and life, which speaks the summary of all good. What is here said of the covenant of priesthood is true of the covenant of grace made with all believers, as spiritual priests, it is a covenant of life and peace, it assures all believers of life and peace, everlasting peace, everlasting life; of all happiness both in this world and in that to come. This covenant was made with the whole tribe of Levi, when they were distinguished from the rest of the tribes, were not numbered with them, but were taken from among them and appointed over the tabernacle of testimony, Num. b.



Numb. i. 49, 50. by virtue of which appointment God hath, Numb. iii. 12. *The Levites shall be mine.* It was made with Aaron when he and his sons were taken to minister unto the Lord in the priest's office, Exod. xxviii. 1. Aaron is therefore called the *father of the Levites*, Psal. cxi. 31. It was made with Phinehas and his family, a branch of Aaron's upon a particular occasion, Numb. xxv. 12, 13. And therefore the covenant of priesthood is called, as here, the *covenant of peace*, because by it peace was made and kept between God and Israel. These great blessings of *life and peace* contained in that covenant, God gave to him, to Levi, to Aaron, to Phinehas; provided life and peace to them and their posterity, intrusted them with these benefits for the use and behoof of God's Israel; they received that they might give, as Christ himself did, Psal. lxxviii. 18.

Now for the further opening of this covenant, observe, (1.) The considerations upon which it was grounded; it was *for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.* The tribe of Levi gave a signal proof of their holy fear of God, and their reverence for his name, when they appeared to bravely against the worshippers of the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. and for their zeal in that matter God bestowed this blessing upon them, and invited them to consecrate themselves unto him. Phinehas also shewed himself zealous in the fear of God and his judgments, when to stay the plague he stabbed *Zimri and Cozbi*, Psal. cvi. 30, 31. Note, Those, and those only, that fear God's name, can expect the benefit of the covenant, of *life and peace*; and those who give proofs of their zeal for God, it shall without fail be recompensed to them, in the glorious privileges of the Christian priesthood. Some read this not as the consideration of the grant, but as the condition of it, *I gave them to him, provided that he should fear before me.* If God grant us life and peace, he expects we should fear before him.

(2.) The trust that was lodged in the priests by this covenant, ver. 7. They were hereby made the *messengers of the Lord of hosts*, messengers of that covenant of life and peace; not mediators of it; but only messengers; or ambassadors, employed to treat of the terms of peace between God and Israel. He is God's mouth to his people, from whom they must receive instructions according to the lively oracles. This was the office to which Levi was advanced; because in his zeal for God, he did not acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children, therefore they shall touch Jacob's God's judgments, Deut. xxxiii. 9, 10. Note, It is an honour to God's servants, to be employed as his messengers, and to be sent on his errands. Angels have their name from thence, Haggai was called the *Lord's messengers*. This being their office, observe, (1.) What is the duty of ministers, the priests *lips should keep knowledge*, nor keep it from his people, but keep it for them: Ministers must be men of knowledge, for how are they able to teach others the things of God, who are themselves unacquainted with those things, or unready in them? they must keep knowledge; must furnish themselves with it, and retain what they have got, that they may be like the good householder, that brings out of his treasury things new and old. Not only their heads, but their lips must keep knowledge; they must not only have it, but they must have it ready, must have it at hand, must have it (as we say) at their tongue's end to be communicated to others as there is occasion. Thus we read of wisdom in the lips of him that both understands, with which they feed many, Prov. x. 13—21. (2.) What is the duty of the people; they should seek the law at his mouth; should consult the priests as God's messengers, and not only hear the message, but ask questions upon it, that they may the better understand it, and mistakes concerning it may be prevented and rectified. We are all concerned fully to know what the will of the Lord is, to know it distinctly and certainly, should be desirous to know it, and therefore inquisitive concerning it; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? must not only consult the written word, to the law and to the testimony, but must have recourse to God's messengers, and desire instruction and advice from them in the affairs of our souls, as we do from physicians and lawyers concerning our bodies and estates. Not but that ministers ought to lay down the law of God, to those who do not enquire concerning it or desire the knowledge of it, they must instruct them that oppose themselves, 2 Tim. ii. 25, as well as those that offer themselves; but it is people's duty to apply themselves to them for instruction, not only to hear, but to ask questions; watchmen, what of the night? Thus if ye will enquire, enquire ye, see Isa. xxi. 8—11, 12. People should not only seek comfort at the mouth of their ministers, but seek the law there, for if we be found in the way of duty, we shall find it, the way of comfort.

2. Here is a memorial of the fidelity and zeal of many of their predecessors in the priest's office, which is mentioned as an aggravation of their sin, in degenerating from such honourable ancestors, and deserting such illustrious examples; and as a justification of God in withdrawing from them those tokens of his presence, which he had granted to them that kept close to him. See here, ver. 6. how good the godly priest was, whose steps they should have trod in, and what good he did, God's grace working with him. (1.) See how good he was. He was ready and mighty in the scriptures, the law of truth was in his mouth, for the use of those that asked the law at his mouth; and in all his discourses there appeared more or less of the law of truth; every thing he said was under the government of that law, and with it he governed others; he spake as one having authority, every word was a law, and as one that had both wisdom and integrity, it was a law of truth; and truth is a law, it has a commanding power; it is by truth that Christ rules. The law of truth was in his mouth, for his resolutions of cases of conscience proposed to him, were such as might be depended upon; his opinion was a law; iniquity was not found in his lips; he did not handle the word of God deceitfully to please men, to serve a turn, or make an interest for himself, but told all that consulted him what the law was, whether it were pleasing or displeasing; he did not pronounce that unclean which was clean, nor that clean that was unclean, as one of the rabbins expounds it. And his conversation was of a piece with his doctrine. God himself gives this honourable testimony, he walked with me in peace and equity; he did not think it enough to talk of God, but he walked with him; the temper of his mind, and the tenor of his life, was of a piece with his doctrine and profession; he lived a life of communion with God, and made it his constant care and business to please him; he lived like a priest that was chosen to walk before God, 1 Sam. ii. 30. His conversation was quiet, he was meek and gentle towards all men, was a pattern and promoter of love, he walked with God in peace, was himself peaceable, and a great peace-maker; and it was honest, he did no wrong to any, but made conscience of rendering to all their due; he walked with me in equity, or rectitude: We must not for peace sake transgress the rules of equity, but must keep the peace as far as is consistent with justice; the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable; Ministers of all men are concerned to walk with God in peace and equity, that they may be examples to the flock. (2.) See what good he did: he answered the ends of his advancement to that office, he did turn many away from iniquity, he made it his business to do good, and God crowned his endeavours with wonderful success; he helped to save many a soul from death, and there are multitudes now in heaven blessing God that ever they knew him. Ministers must lay out themselves to the utmost, for the conversion of sinners, and even among those that have the name of Israelites, there is need of conversion work, there are many to be turned from

iniquity; and they must reckon it an honour, and a rich reward of their labour, if they may but be instrumental herein; it is God only that by his grace can turn men from iniquity, and yet it is here said of a pious laborious minister, that he turned men from iniquity, as a worker together with God, and an instrument in his hand; and they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars, Dan. xii. 3. Note, These ministers, and those only, are like to turn men from iniquity, that preach sound doctrine, and live good lives, and both according to the scripture; for as one of the rabbins observes here, when the priest is upright, many will be upright.

1. Here is a high charge drawn up against the priests of the present age, who violated the covenant of the priesthood, and went directly contrary both to the rules and to the examples that were set before them. Many particulars of their sins we had in the chapter before, and we find, Neh. xiii. that there were many corruptions crept into the church of the Jews at this time, mixed marriages, admitting strangers into the house of God, profanation of the sabbath-day, which were all owing to the carelessness and unfaithfulness of the priests; here it is charged upon them in general, (1.) That they transgress the rule; ye are departed out of the way, ver. 8. out of the good way which God hath prescribed to you, and which your godly ancestors walked before you in. It is ill with a people, when those whose office it is to guide them in the way, do themselves depart out of it. Ye have not kept my ways, nor kept in them yourselves, nor done your part to keep others in them, ver. 9. (2.) That they have betrayed their trust; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi; have violated it, have contradicted the great intentions of it, and have done what in you lay to frustrate and defeat them; you have managed your office, as if it were designed only to feed your fat, and make you great, and not for the glory of God and the good of the souls of men; this was a corrupting of the covenant of Levi, it was a perverting the ends of the office, and making it truckle to those sensual secular things, over which it ought always to have dominion. And thus they forfeited the benefit of that covenant, and corrupted it to themselves, they made it void, and lost that life and peace which was by it settled upon them. We have no reason to expect God should perform his part of the covenant if we do not make conscience of performing ours. Another instance of their betraying their trust was, that they were partial in the law, ver. 9. In the law given to them, they would pick and choose their duty, this they would do, and that they would not do, just as they pleased, which is the fashion of hypocrites, while those whose hearts are upright with God, have a respect to all his commandments. Or rather in the law they were to lay down to the people; in this they knew faces, to the word is, they accepted persons, they wilfully misinterpreted and misapplied the law, either to crop those they had a spleen to, or countenance those they had a kindness for; would wink at those sins in some, which in others they would be sharp upon, according as their interest or inclination led them. God is no respecter of persons in making his law, nor will he in reckoning for the breach of it, he regarded not the rich more than the poor, and therefore his priests; his ministers misrepresent him, and do him a great deal of dishonour, if in doctrine or discipline they be respecters of persons. See 1 Tim. v. 21. (3.) That they did a great deal of mischief to the souls of men, which they should have helped to save. Ye have caused many to stumble at the laws not only to fall in the law, as the margin reads it, by transgressing it, taught and encouraged to do so by the examples of the priests, but to stumble at the law, by contracting prejudices against it; as if the law were the minister of sin, and gave countenance to it. Thus Hophni and Phinehas by their wickedness made the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred, 1 Sam. ii. 17. There are many to whom the law of God is a stumbling block, the gospel of Christ a snare of death unto death, and Christ himself a rock of offence; and nothing contributes more to this than the vicious lives of those that make a profession of religion, by which men are tempted to say, it is all a jest; this is properly a scandal, a stone of stumbling; there is no good reason it should be so to any, but woe to them by whom this offence comes. (4.) That when they were under the rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God for it, they would not hear, that is, they would not heed, they would not lay it to heart; they were not at all grieved or shamed for their sin, nor affected with the tokens of God's displeasure they were under: what we hear doth us no good, unless we lay it to heart, and admit the impositions of it. Ye shall not lay it to heart to give glory unto my name, by repentance and reformation. Therefore we should lay to heart the things of God, that we may give glory to the name of God, may praise him in and for all that whereby he hath made himself known. It is bad in any to rob God of his honour, but worst in ministers, whose office and business it is to bear up his name, and to give him the glory due to it.

4. Here is a record of the judgments God had brought upon these priests for their profaneness, and their profanation of holy things. (1.) They had lost their comfort, ver. 2. I have already cursed your blessings; they had not the comfort of their work, which is the satisfaction of doing good; for the blessings with which they as priests blessed the people, God was so far from saying amen to, that he turned them into curses, as he did Baalam's curses into blessings, that profane people should not have the favour of receiving God's blessings, nor those profane priests the honour of conferring and conveying them, but both should be under the tokens of his wrath; nor had they the comfort of their wages, for the blessings with which God blessed them were turned into a curse to them by their abuse of them, they could not receive them as the gifts of his favour when they had made themselves so obnoxious to his displeasure; by not laying to heart the reproofs given them. (2.) They had lost their credit, ver. 9. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people; while they glorified God he dignified them, and supported their reputation, and a great interest they had in the love and esteem of the people, while they did their duty, and walked with God in peace and equity, every one had a value and veneration for them, they were truly styled the reverend, the priests, but when they forsook the way of God, and corrupted the covenant of Levi, they thereby made themselves not only mean but vile in the eyes even of the common people, who the more they honoured the order, the more they hated the men that were a dishonour to it. Their carriage, their mis carriage had a direct tendency to this, and God owns his hand in it, and will have it looked upon as a just judgment of his upon them, and not only produced by their sin but answering to it; they put dishonour upon God, and made his table and the fruit thereof contemptible, chap. i. 12. and therefore God justly put dishonour upon them, and made them contemptible; they exposed themselves, and therefore God exposed them. Note, Sin as it is a reproach to any people, so especially to priests, there is not a more despicable animal upon the face of the earth than a profane, wicked, scandalous minister.

5. Here is a sentence of wrath passed upon them, and this the prophet begins with, ver. 2, 3. But it is conditional, if you will not lay it to heart, implying if you will, God's anger shall be turned away, and all shall be well; but if you persist in these wicked courses bear your doom; your sin will be your ruin. (1.) They shall fall and lie under the curse of God, I will send a curse upon you; the wrath of God shall be revealed against them according to the threatenings of the written word. Note, They who



violate the commands of the law, lay themselves under the curses of the law. (2.) Neither their employment, nor their enjoyments as priests shall be clean to them. *I will curse your blessings*, so that you shall neither be blessed yourselves, nor blessings to the people; but even your plenty shall be a plague to you, and ye shall be plagues to your generation. (3.) The fruits of the earth which they had the tithe of should be no comfort to them. *Behold, I will corrupt your seed*, the corn you sow shall rot under ground, and never come up again; the consequence of which must needs be famine and scarcity of provisions; so that no meat-offerings shall be brought to the altar, which the priests will soon have a loss of. Or it may be understood of the seed of the word, which they preached; God threatens to deny his blessing, with the instructions they gave the people, so that their labour shall be lost, as that of the husbandman is, when the seed is corrupt; and so it agrees with that threatening, *Jer. xxiii. 32. They shall not profit this people at all.* (4.) They and their services shall be rejected of God, he will be so far from taking any pleasure in them, that he will loathe and detest them. *I will spread dung in your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts*, i. e. of the sacrifices that were offered at those feasts, instead of being himself pleased with the fat of their sacrifices, he will shew himself displeased by throwing the dung of them in their faces, which he doth in effect when he saith, *bring no more vain oblations, your incense is an abomination to me.* Note, Those that rest in their external performances of religion, which they should count but dung, that they may win Christ, shall not only come short of acceptance with God in them, but shall be filled with shame and confusion for their folly. (5.) And will end at last in their utter ruin, *one shall take you away with it*, they shall be so overspread with the dung of their sacrifices, that they shall be carried away with it to the dunghill as a part of it. Any one shall serve to take you away, the common scavenger; *reprobate silver shall men call them*, and treat them accordingly, because the Lord has rejected them.

10. Have we not all one father, hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? 11. ¶ Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. 12. The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts. 13. And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, infomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it, with good will at your hand. 14. ¶ Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. 15. And did he not make one? yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that you deal not treacherously. 17. ¶ Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them? or, Where is the God of judgment?

Corrupt practices are the genuine fruit and product of corrupt principles; and the badness of men's hearts and lives is owing to some loose atheistical notions which they have got, and govern themselves by. Now in these verses we have an instance of this, we here find men dealing falsely with one another, and it is because they think falsely of their God. Observe,

1. How corrupt their practices were; in general they dealt treacherously every man against his brother, *ver. 10.* It cannot be expected, he that is false to his God should be true to his friend; they that dealt treacherously with God and his tithes and offerings, and had defrauded him, and thus conscience was debauched, its bonds and cords broken, and a door opened to all manner of injustice and dishonesty, and the bonds of relation and natural affection are broken through likewise, and no difficulty made of it. Some think the treacherous dealings here reproved are the same with those instances of oppression and extortion which we find complained of to Nehemiah about this time, *Neh. v. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.* Therein they forgot the God of their fathers, and the covenant of their fathers, and rendered their offerings unacceptable, *Isa. i. 11.* But it seems rather to refer to what was amiss in their marriages, which was likewise complained of, *Neh. xiii. 23.*

Two things are here charged with as very provoking to God in this matter; taking strange wives of heathen nations, and abusing and putting away the wives they had of their own nation, and in both these they dealt treacherously, and violated a sacred covenant; the former was in contempt of the covenant of peculiarity, the latter of the marriage-covenant.

(1.) In contempt of the covenant God made with Israel, as a peculiar people to himself, they married strange wives, which was expressly prohibited and provided against in that covenant, *Deut. vii. 3.* Observe here,

1. What good reason they had to deal faithfully with God and one another in this covenant, and not to make marriages with the heathen. (1.) They were expressly bound out from such marriages by covenant. God engaged to do them good upon this condition, that they should not mingle themselves with the heathen; this was the covenant of their fathers, the covenant made with their fathers, noting the antiquity and the authority of it; and its being the great charter by which that nation was incorporated they lay under all possible obligations to observe it strictly, and yet they profaned it, as if they were not bound by it. They profane the covenant of their fathers, who live in disobedience to the command of the God of their fathers. (2.) They were a peculiar people, united in one body, and therefore ought to have united for the preserving of the honour of their peculiarity. Have we not all one Father? Yes we have, for has not one God

created us? Are we not all his offspring? Are we not made of one blood? yes, certainly we are; God is a common father to all mankind, and upon that account all we are brethren, members one of another, and therefore ought to put away lying, *Eph. iv. 25*, and not to deal treacherously, nor nor any man against his brother. But here it seems to refer to the Jewish nation; have we not all one father, Abraham or Jacob? This they prided themselves in, *We have Abraham to our father*, but here it is turned upon them as an aggravation of their sin in betraying the honour of their nation, by marrying with heathens; hath not one God created us? i. e. formed us into a people, made us a nation by ourselves, and put a life into us, distinct from that of other nations? And should not this oblige us to maintain the dignity of our character? Note, The consideration of the unity of the church in Christ, its founder and father, should engage us carefully to preserve the purity of the church, and to guard against all corruptions. (3.) They were dedicated to God, as well as distinguished from the neighbouring nations. *Israel was holiness to the Lord*, *Jer. ii. 3.* taken into covenant with him, set apart by him, for himself to be to him for a name and a praise, and upon this account he loved them, and delighted in them; the sanctuary set up among them, was the holiness of the Lord, which he loved, and of which he said, *it is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have dwelt in it*; but by their marrying strange wives, they profaned this holiness, and laid the honour of it in the dust. Note, Those that are devoted to God, and beloved of him, are concerned to preserve their integrity; that they may not throw themselves out of his love, not lose the honour, or defeat the end of their dedication to him.

2. How treacherously they dealt notwithstanding. They profaned themselves, in that very thing which was prescribed to them for the preserving of the honour of their singularity. Judah has married the daughter of a strange god. The harm was not so much, that she was the daughter of a strange nation. God has made all nations of men, and is himself King of nations, but that she is the daughter of a strange god, trained up in the service and worship of false gods; and at their dispose, as a daughter at her father's dispose, and having a dependence upon them; hence some of the Rabbins (quoted by Dr. Pocock) say, *He that marries an heathen woman is, as if he made himself son-in-law to an idol.* It began the corruption of the old world, that the sons of God married the daughters of men, *Gen. vi. 2.* It is the same thing that is here complained of, but as it is expressed, it sounds worse, the sons of God married the daughters of a strange god. Herein Judah is said to have dealt treacherously, for they basely betrayed their own honour, and profaned that holiness of the Lord, which they should have loved; so some read it; and it is said to be an abomination committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, it was hateful to God, and very unbecoming those that were called by his name. Note, It is an abominable thing for those that profess the holiness of the Lord, to profane it, particularly by yoking themselves unequally with unbelievers.

3. How severely God would reckon with them for it, *ver. 12.* The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this; that marries the daughter of a strange god: he has in effect cut himself off from the holy nation, and joined in with foreigners and aliens to the common wealth of Israel, and so shall his doom be; *God will cut him off, him and all that belong to him*, so the original intimates. He shall be cut off from Israel and from Jerusalem, and not be written among the living there. The Lord will cut off both the master and the scholar, that is guilty of this sin; both the teachers and the taught, the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch; both him that wakeneth, and him that answereth, so it is in the margin, for the master calls up his scholar to his business, and stirs him up in it; they shall be cut off together, out of the tabernacles of Jacob: God will no more own them as belonging to his nation: nay, and the priest that offereth an offering to the Lord, if he marry a strange wife (as we find many of the priests did, *Ezra x. 18.*) he shall not escape: the offering he offers shall not atone for him, but he shall be cut off from the temple of the Lord, as others from the tabernacles of Jacob. *Nehemiah chased away from him*, and from the Priesthood, one of the sons of the high-priest, whom he found guilty of this sin, *Neh. xiii. 28.*

(2.) In contempt of the marriage-covenant, which God instituted for the common benefit of mankind, they abused and put away the wives they had of their own nation, probably to make room for those strange wives, when it was all the fashion to marry such, *ver. 13.* This also have you done, this is the second article of the charge, for the way of sin is down-hill, and one violation of the covenant is an inlet to another.

1. Let us see what it is that is here complained of; they did not carry it as they ought to do towards their wives. (1.) They were cross with them, froward and peevish, and made their lives bitter to them, so that when they came with their wives and families to worship God at the solemn feasts, which they should have done with rejoicing, they were all out of humour, the poor wives were ready to break their hearts, and not daring to make their case known to any other, they complained to God, and covered the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying. This is illustrated by the instance of Hannah, who upon the account of her husband's having another wife (though otherwise a kind husband) and the discontent thence arising, whenever they went up to the house of the Lord to worship, *fretted and wept*, and was in bitterness of soul, and would not eat, *2 Sam. i. 6, 7—10.* So it was with these wives here; this was so contrary to the cheerfulness which God requires in his worshippers, that it spoiled the acceptableness of their devotion, *God regardeth not their offering any more*; see here what a good master we serve, who will not have his altar covered with tears, but compassed with songs; which condemn those that left his worship for that of idols, among the rites of which we find women weeping for Tammuz, *Ezek. viii. 14.* and the blood of the worshippers gushing out upon the altar, *1 Kings xviii. 28.* See also what an ill thing it is to put others out of frame, for the cheerful worship of God; though it is their fault by their fretfulness, to indispose themselves for their duty, yet it is much more their fault that provoked them to make them fret. It is a reason given, why yoke fellows should live in holy love and joy, that their prayer may not be hindered, *1 Pet. iii. 7.* (2.) They dealt treacherously with them, *ver. 14, 15, 16.* They did not perform their promises to them, but defrauded them of their maintenance or dowry, or took in concubines, to share in the affection that was due to their wives only. (2.) They put them away, gave them a bill of divorce, and turned them off, nay, perhaps they did it without the ceremony that the law of Moses prescribed, *ver. 16.* (4.) In all this they covered violence with their garments; they abused their wives, and were vexations to them, and yet in the sight of others they pretended to be loving to them, and tender of them, and to cast a skirt over them. It is common for those that do violence, to advance some specious pretence or other, wherewith to cover it as with a garment.

4. Let us see the proof and aggravation of the charge. (1.) It is sufficiently proved by the testimony of God himself; the Lord has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, *ver. 14.* has been witness to the marriage-covenant between thee and her, for to him you appealed concerning your sincerity in it, and fidelity to it; he has been a witness to all the violations of it, and all thy treacherous dealings in contempt of it, and



is ready to judge between thee and her. Note, This should engage us to be faithful both to God, and to all with whom we have to do, that God himself is a witness both to all our covenants and to all our covenant breaches: and he is a witness against whom there is no exception. (2.) It is highly aggravated by the consideration of the person wronged and abused. (1.) She is *thy wife*; thy own, bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh; the nearest to thee of all the relations thou hast in the world, and to cleave to whom thou must quit the rest. (2.) She is *the wife of thy youth*, i. e. who had thy affections when they were at the strongest, was thy first choice, and with whom thou hast lived long. Let not the darling of thy youth be the scorn and loathing of thine age. (3.) She is *thy companion*, she has long been an equal sharer with thee in thy cares and griefs and joys. The wife is to be looked upon, not as a *servant*, but as a *companion* to the husband, with whom he should freely converse, and take sweet counsel as with a friend, and in whose company he should take delight more than in any other's, for is she not appointed to be *thy companion*? (4.) She is *the wife of thy covenant*, to whom thou art so firmly bound, that while she continues faithful, thou canst not be loosed from her, for it was a covenant for life. It is the wife with whom thou hast covenanted, and who hast covenanted with thee; there is an oath of God between you, which is not to be trifled with; is not to be played fast and loose with. Married people should often call to mind their marriage-vows, and review them with all seriousness, as those that make conscience of performing what they promised.

(3.) Let us see the reasons given why man and wife should continue together to their lives end in holy love and peace, and neither quarrel with each other, nor part from each other. (1.) Because God has joined them together. Ver. 15. Did not he make one? one Eve for one Adam, that Adam might never take another to her to vex her, Lev. xviii. 18. nor put her away to make room for another; it is great wickedness to complain of the law of marriage as a confinement, when Adam in innocency, in honour, in Eden, in the garden of pleasure, was confined to one. Yet God had the residue of the Spirit, he could have made another Eve, as amiable as that he did make, but designing Adam a help meet for him, he made him one wife, had he made him more he had not had a meet help. And wherefore did he make but one woman for one man? It was that he might seek a godly seed, a seed of God, so the word is, a seed that should bear the image of God, be employed in the service of God, and be devoted to his glory and honour; that every man having his own wife, and but one according to the law, 1 Cor. vii. 2. they might live in chaste and holy love, under the directions and restraints of the divine law, and not as brute beasts under the dominion of lust, and thus might propagate the nature of man in such a way as might make it most likely to participate of a divine nature; that the children being born in holy matrimony, which is an ordinance of God, and by which the inclinations of nature are kept under the regulations of God's command, might thus be made a seed to serve him, and be bred, as they are born, under his direction and dominion. Note, The raising up of a godly seed, which shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation, is one great end of the institution of marriage, but that is a good reason why the marriage-bed should be kept undefiled, and the marriage-bond inviolable. Husbands and wives must therefore live in the fear of God, that their seed may be a godly seed, else were they unclean, but now they are holy as children of the covenant, the marriage covenant, which was a type of the covenant of grace, and the conjugal union, when thus preserved entire, of the mystical union between Christ and his church, in which he seeks and secures to himself a godly seed, see Eph. v. 25—32. (2.) Because he is much displeased with those who go about to put asunder what he has joined together, ver. 16. The God of Israel saith, he hateth putting away. He had indeed permitted it to the Jews for the hardness of their hearts, or rather limited and clogged it, Matt. xix. 8. but he hated it, especially as they practised it, who put away their wives for every cause, Matt. xix. 3. Let those wives that elope from their husbands, and put themselves away, those husbands that are cruel to their wives, and turn them away, or take their affections off their wives, and place them upon others, yea, and those husbands and wives that live asunder by consent, for want of love to each other, let such as these know that the God of Israel hates such practices, however vain men may make a jest of them.

4. Let us see the caution inferred from all this, We have it twice, ver. 15. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth, and again, ver. 16. Note, They that would be kept from sin must take heed to their spirits, for there all sin begins; they must keep their hearts with all diligence; must keep a jealous eye upon them, and a strict hand, and must watch against the first risings of sin there. We shall act as we are spirited, and therefore that we may regulate our actions, we must consider what manner of spirit we are of; we must take heed to our spirits, with reference to our particular relations, and see that we stand rightly affected to them, and be of a good temper, for otherwise we shall be in danger of dealing treacherously. If our own hearts deal treacherously with us, whom will they not deal treacherously with?

2. Observe how corrupt their principles were to which were owing all these corrupt practices. Let us run up the streams to the fountain. Ver. 17. Ye have wearied the Lord with your words; they thought to evade the convictions of the word, and to justify themselves by cavilling with God's proceedings, but their defence was their offence, and their vindication of themselves was the aggravation of their crime; they affronted the Lord with their words, and repeated them so often, and persisted so long in their contradictions, that they even wearied him; see Job. vii. 13. they made him weary of doing them good as he had done, and stopped the current of his favours; or they represented him as weary of governing the world, and willing to quit it and lay aside the care of it. Note, It is a wearisome thing, even to God himself, to hear people insist upon their own justification in their corrupt and wicked practices, and to plead their atheistical principles in vindication of them. But as if God by his prophet had done them wrong, see how impudently they ask, Wherein have we wearied him? What are those vexatious words whereby we have wearied him? Note, Sinful words are more offensive to the God of heaven, than they are commonly thought to be. But God has his proofs ready; two things they had said, at least in their hearts (and thoughts are words to God) with which they had wearied him. (1.) They had denied him to be a holy God, and had asserted that concerning him, which is directly contrary to the doctrine of his holiness; as he is a holy God he hates sin, is of purer eyes than to behold it, and cannot endure to look upon it, Hab. i. 13. He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, Psal. v. 4. and yet they had the impudence to say, in direct contradiction to this, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them. This wicked inference they drew without any reason from the prosperity of sinners in their sinful courses, see chap. iii. 15. as if God's love or hatred were to be known by that which is before us, and these must be concluded good in the sight of the Lord, that are rich in the world. Or this they said because they wished it might be so, they were resolved to do evil, and yet to think themselves good in the sight of the Lord, and to believe that he delighteth in them notwithstanding; and therefore under pretence of making God not so severe as he was commonly re-

presented, they said as they would have it, and thought he was altogether such a one as themselves. Note, Those who think God a friend to sin affront him and deceive themselves. (2.) They had denied him to be the righteous governor of the world. If he did not delight in sin and sinners, yet it would serve their turn to believe, that he would never punish it or them. They said, Where is the God of judgment? That God that we have been so often told would call us to an account, and reckon with us for what we have said and done, where is he? He hath forsaken the earth, and takes no notice of what is said and done there; he hath said he will come to judgment, but where is the promise of his coming? We may do what we please, he sees us not, nor will regard us; it is such a challenge to the Judge of the whole earth, as bids defiance to his justice, and in effect dares him to do his worst. Such scoffers as these there were in the latter days of the Jewish church, and such there shall be in the latter days of the Christian church; but their unbelief shall not make the promise of God of none effect; for the day of the Lord will come; behold, the Judge standeth before the door, the God of judgment is at hand.

### C H A P. III.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A promise of the coming of the Messiah, and of his forerunner, and the errand he comes upon is here particularly described, both the comfort which is coming brings to his church and people, and the terror it will bring to the wicked, ver. 1—5. (2.) A reproof of the Jews for their corrupting of God's ordinances, and sacrilegious robbing him of his dues; with a charge to them to amend this matter, and a promise that if they did, God would return in mercy to them, ver. 7—12. (3.) A description of the wickedness of the wicked that speak against God, ver. 13—15. And of the righteousness of the righteous that speak for him, with the precious promises made to them, ver. 16—18.

1. BEHOLD, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the LORD whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple: even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. 2. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope. 3. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. 4. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. 5. And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the forcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts. 6. For I am the LORD, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

The first words of this chapter seem a direct answer to the profane, atheistical demand of the scoffers of those days which closed the foregoing chapter, where is the God of judgment? To which it is readily answered, here he is; he is just at the door: the long-expected Messiah is ready to appear; and he saith, for judgment am I come into this world; for that judgment which you so impudently bid defiance to. One of the rabbins saith, the meaning of this is, That God will raise up a righteous king to set things in order, even the king Messiah. And the beginning of the gospel of Christ, is expressly said to be the accomplishment of this promise, with which the Old Testament concludes, Mark i. 1, 2. So that by this the two Testaments are as it were tacked together, and made to answer one another. Now here we have,

1. A prophecy of the appearing of his forerunner John the Baptist, which the prophet Isaiah had foretold, chap. xl. 3. as the preparing of the way of the Lord, to which this here seems to have a reference, for the words of the latter prophets confirmed those of the former. Behold I will send my messenger, or I do send him, or I am sending him, I am determined to send him, he will now shortly come, and will not come unsent, though to a careless generation he comes unsent for. Observe, (1.) He is God's messenger; that is his office; he is Malachi, so the word is, the same with the name of this prophet; he is my angel, my ambassador; John Baptist had his commission from Heaven, and not of men. All held John Baptist for a prophet for he was God's messenger, as the prophets were, and came on the same errand to the world that they were sent upon, to call men to repentance and reformation. (2.) He is Christ's harbinger. He shall prepare the way before me; by calling men to those duties which qualify them to receive the comforts of the Messiah and his coming; and by taking them off from a confidence, in their relation to Abraham as their father, which they thought would serve their turn without a saviour; and by giving notice that the Messiah was now at hand, and so raising men's expectations of him, and making them readily to go into the measures he would take for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. Note, God observes a method in his work, and before he comes takes care to have his way prepared. This is like the giving of a sign; the church was told long before that the Messiah would come; and here it is added, that by the same token, a little before he appears there shall be a signal given; a great prophet shall arise that shall give notice of his approach, and call to the everlasting gates and doors to lift up their heads, and give him admission. The accomplishment of this is a proof that Jesus is the Christ; is he that should come, and we are to look for no other; for there was such a messenger sent before him, who made ready a people prepared for the Lord, Luke i. 17. The Jewish writers run themselves into gross absurdities to evade the conviction of this evidence: some of them say, the messenger is the angel of death, who shall take the wicked out of this life, to be sent into hell-torments; others of them say, it is Messiah the son of Joseph, who shall appear before Messiah the son of David; others, this prophet himself; others, an angel from heaven; such mistakes do they run into that will not receive the truth.

2. A prophecy of the appearing of the Messiah himself. The Lord whom ye



ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the God of judgment, who ye think has forsaken the earth, and you wot not what has become of him. The Messiah has been long called he that should come, and you may assure yourselves that now shortly he will come. (1.) He is the Lord. Adonai, the basis and foundation, on which the world is founded and fastened; the ruler and governor of all; that one Lord over all, Acts x. 36. that hath all power committed to him, Matt. xxviii. 18. and is to reign over the house of Jacob for ever, Luke i. 33. (2.) He is the messenger of the covenant, or the angel of this covenant, that blessed one that was sent from heaven to negotiate a peace, and settle a correspondence between God and man. He is the angel, the archangel, the Lord of the angels, who received commission from the Father to bring man home to God by a covenant of grace, who had revolted from him by the violation of the covenant of innocence. Christ is the angel of this covenant, by whose mediation it is brought about and established, as God's covenant with Israel was made by the disposition of angels, Acts vii. 54. Gal. iii. 14. Christ as a prophet, is the messenger and mediator of the covenant, may he is given for a covenant, Isa. xlix. 8. That covenant which is all our salvation, began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 3. Though he is the prime of the covenant, as some read this here, yet he condescended to be the messenger of it; that we might have full assurance of God's good-will towards man upon his word. (3.) He it is whom ye seek, whom ye delight in; whom the pious Jews expect and desire, and whose coming they think of with a great deal of pleasure. In looking and waiting for him, they looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and waited for the consolation of Israel, Luke ii. 25—38. Christ was to be the desire of all nations, desirable to all, Hag. ii. 7. But he was the desire of the Jewish nation actually, because they had the promise of his coming made to them. Note, Those that seek Jesus shall find pleasure in him: If he be our heart's desire, he will be our heart's delight; and we have reason to delight in him who is the messenger of the covenant, and to bid him welcome who came to us on so kind an errand. (4.) He shall suddenly come; his coming draws nigh, and we see it not at so great a distance as the patriarchs saw it at; or he shall come immediately after the appearing of John Baptist; shall even tread on the heels of his forerunner; when that morning-star appears, believe that the sun of righteousness is not far off. Or he shall come suddenly, i. e. he shall come when by many he is not looked for; as his second coming will be, so his first coming was at midnight, when some had done looking for him, for shall he find faith on the earth? Luke xviii. 8. The Jews reckon the Messiah among the things that come unawares; so Dr. Pocock. And the coming of the Son of man in his day is said to be as the lightning, which is very surprising, Luke xvii. 24. (5.) He shall come to his temple, this temple at Jerusalem which was lately built, that latter house which he was to be the glory of. It is his temple, for it is his Father's house, John ii. 16. Christ at forty days old was presented in the temple, and thither Simeon went by the Spirit, according to the direction of this prophecy to see him, Luke ii. 27. At twelve years old he was in the temple about his Father's business, Luke ii. 49. When he rode in triumph in Jerusalem, it should seem he went directly to the temple, Matt. xxi. 12. and ver. 14. thither the blind and the lame come to him to be healed; there he often preached, and often disputed, and often wrought miracles. By this it appears that the Messiah was to come while that temple was standing, that therefore being long since destroyed, we must conclude that he is come, and we are to look for no other. Note, Those that would be acquainted with Christ, and obtain his favour, must meet with him in his temple, for there he records his name, and there he will bless his people. There we must receive his oracles, and there we must pay our homage. (6.) The promise of his coming is repeated and ratified, Behold, he shall come with the Lord of hosts; you may depend upon his word who cannot lie, he shall come, he will come, he will not tarry.

3. An account given of the great ends and intentions of his coming, ver. 2. He is one whom they seek, and one whom they delight in, and yet who may abide in the day of his coming? It is a thing to be thought of with great seriousness, and with a holy awe and reverence; for who shall stand when he appeareth? Though he comes not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life. This may refer, (1.) To the terrors of his appearance. Even in the days of his flesh there were some emanations of his glory and power, such as none could stand before, witness his transfiguration, and the prodigies that attended his death; and we read of divers that trembled before him, as Mark v. 33. (2.) To the troublous times that should follow soon after. The Jewish doctors speak of the pangs or griefs of the Messiah, meaning (they say) the great afflictions that should be to Israel at the time of his coming; he himself speaks of great tribulation then approaching, such as was not since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be, Matt. xxiv. 21. (3.) To the trial which his coming would make of the children of men. He shall be like a refiner's fire, which separates between the gold and the dross, by melting the ore, or like fuller's soap, which with much rubbing fetcheth the spots out of the cloth. Christ came to discover men, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed, Luke ii. 35. to distinguish men, to separate between the precious and the vile, for his fan is in his hand, Matt. iii. 12. to send fire on the earth, not peace, but rather division, Luke xii. 49—51. to shake heaven and earth, that the wicked might be shaken out, Job xxxviii. 13. and that the things which cannot be shaken, might remain, Heb. xii. 27. See what the effect of the trial will be, that shall be made by the gospel.

(1.) The gospel shall work good upon those that are disposed to do good; to them it shall be a favour of life unto life, ver. 3. He shall sit as a refiner: Christ by his gospel shall purify and reform his church, and by his Spirit working with it shall regenerate and cleanse particular souls; for to this end he gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, Eph. v. 26. and purify to himself a peculiar people, Tit. ii. 14. Christ is the great refiner. Observe, (1.) Who they are that he will purify; the sons of Levi, i. e. all those that are devoted to his praise, and employed in his service, as the tribe of Levi was, and whom he designs to make unto our God spiritual priests, Rev. i. 6. a holy priesthood, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Note, All true Christians are sons of Levi, set apart for God, to do the service of his sanctuary, and to war the good warfare. (2.) How he will purify them; he will purge them as gold and silver, i. e. he will sanctify them inwardly: will not only wash away the spots they have contracted from without, but will take away the dross that is found in them; will separate from them their indwelling corruptions which rendered their faculties worthless and useless, and so make them like gold refined, both valuable and serviceable. He will purge them with fire, as gold and silver are purged, for he baptizeth with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, Matt. iii. 11. with the Holy Ghost working like fire. He will purge them by afflictions and manifold temptations, that the trial of their faith, might be found to praise and honour, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. He will purge them so as to make them a precious people to himself. (3.) What will be the effect of it; that they may offer unto the Lord an offering of righteousness, i. e. that they may be in sincerity converted to God, and consecrated to his praise; hence we read of the offering up, or sacrificing of the Gentiles to God, when they were sanctified by the Holy Ghost, Rom. xv. 16. And that they may in a spiritual manner

worship God according to his will; may offer the sacrifices of righteousness, Phil. iv. 5. the offering of prayer, and praise, and holy love; that they may be the true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, John iv. 23, 24. Note, We cannot offer unto the Lord any right performances in religion, unless our persons be justified and sanctified. Till we ourselves be refined and purified by the grace of God, we cannot do any thing that will redound to the glory of God. God had respect to Abel first, and then to his offerings; and therefore God purged his people, that they may offer their offerings to him in righteousness, Zeph. iii. 9. He therefore makes the tree good, that the fruit may be good. And then it follows, ver. 4. The offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasant unto the Lord. It shall no longer be offensive as it has been, when in the former days they worshipped other gods with the God of Israel, or when in the present days they brought the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice, but it shall be acceptable, he will be pleased with the offerers, and their offerings, as in the days of old, and as in former years: as in the primitive times of the church, as when God had respect to Abel's sacrifice, and smelled a savour of rest from Noah's, and when he kindled Aaron's sacrifice with fire from heaven. When the Messiah comes, (1.) He will, by his grace in them, make them acceptable; when he has purified and refined them, then they shall offer such sacrifices as God requires and will accept. (2.) He will by his intercession for them make them accepted; he will recommend them and their performances to God, so that their prayers, being perfumed with the incense of his intercession, shall be pleasant unto the Lord; for he hath made us accepted in the beloved, and in him is well pleased, with those that are in him, Matt. iii. 17. and bring forth fruit in him. (2.) It shall turn for a testimony against those that are resolved to go on in their wickedness, ver. 5. This is the direct answer to their challenge, Where is the God of judgment? You shall know where he is, and shall know it to your terror and confusion, for I will come near to you to judgment; to you that set divine justice at defiance; to them the gospel of Christ will be a sword of death unto death; it will bind them over to condemnation, and will judge them in the great day, John xii. 48. Let us see here, (1.) Who the sinners are that must appear to be judged by the gospel of Christ. They are the forerunners that deal in spiritual wickedness, that forsake the oracles of the God of truth to consult the father of lies. And the adulterers that wallow in the lusts of the flesh, those adulterers that were charged with dealing treacherously, Mal. ii. 15. And the false swearers, who profane God's name, and affront his justice, by calling on those that lie at their mercy, are not able to help themselves; they defraud the hireling in his wages, and will not give him what he agreed for; they crush the widow and fatherless, and will not pay them their just debts, because they cannot prove them, or have not wherewithal to sue for them; the poor stranger too, that has no friend to stand by him, and is ignorant of the laws of the country, they turn aside from his right, so that he cannot keep or cannot recover his own. And that which is at the bottom of all this is, they fear not me, with the Lord of hosts. The transgression of the wicked plainly declares it, that there is no fear of God before his eyes; where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. (2.) Who will appear against them; I will come near, saith God, and will be a swift witness against them. They justify themselves, and their sins having been artfully concealed, hope to escape punishment for want of proof; but God, who sees and knows all things, will himself be witness against them, and his omniscience is instead of a thousand witnesses, for to it the sinner's own conscience shall be made to subscribe, and so every mouth shall be stopped; he will be a swift witness; though they reflect upon him as slow and dilatory, and ask, Where is the God of judgment, and where the promise of his coming? They will find that he is not stuck concerning his threatenings, no more than he is concerning his promises. Judgment against those sinners shall not be put off for want of evidence, for he will be a swift witness. His judgment shall overtake them, and it shall be impossible for them to outrun it. Evil pursues sinners, 4. The ratification of all this, ver. 6. For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Here we have, (1.) God's immutability asserted by himself, and gloried in; I am the Lord, I change not, and therefore no word that I have spoken shall fall to the ground. Is God a just revenger of those that rebel against him? Is he the bountiful rewarder of those that diligently seek him? in both these he is unchangeable. Though the sentence passed against evil works, ver. 5. be not executed speedily, yet it will be executed, for he is the Lord, he changeth not, he is as much an enemy to sin as ever he was, and impenitent sinners will find him so. There needs no fire facinus to revive God's judgment, for it is never antiquated or out of date, but against those that go on still in their trespasses, the curse of his law still remains in full force, power, and virtue. (2.) A particular proof of it, from the comfortable experience which the people of Israel had had of it; they had reason to say he was an unchangeable God, for he had been faithful to his covenant with them and their fathers; if he had not stuck to that, they had been consumed long ago, and cut off from being a people; they had been false and hickle in their carriage to him, and he might justly have abandoned them, and then they had soon been consumed and ruined; but because he remembered his covenant, and would not violate that, nor alter the thing that was gone forth out of his lips, they were preserved from ruin, and recovered from the brink of it. It was purely because he would be as good as his word, Deut. vii. 8. Lev. xxvi. 42. Now as God had kept them from ruin, while the covenant of peculiarity remained in force, purely because he would be faithful to that covenant, and would shew that he is not a man that he should lie, Numb. xxiii. 19. so when that covenant shall be superseded, and set aside by the New Testament, and they, by rejecting the blessings of it, lay themselves open to the curses, he will shew that in the determinations of his wrath, as well as in those of his mercy, he is not a man that he should repent; but will then be as true to his threatenings, as hitherto he has been to his promises, see 1 Sam. xv. 29. We may all apply this very sensibly to ourselves; because we have to do with a God that changeth not, therefore it is that we are not consumed, even because his compassions fail not, they are new every morning, great is his faithfulness, Lam. iii. 23.

7. ¶ Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? 8. ¶ Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10. Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that



that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.* 11. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. 12. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts.

We have here God's controversy with the men of that generation, for deserting his service, and robbing him; wicked servants indeed, that not only run away from their master, but run away with their master's goods.

1. They had run away from their master, and quitted the work he gave them to do, ver. 7. *Ye have gone away from mine ordinances and have not kept them.* The ordinances of God's worship were the business, which as servants they must mind, the talents they must trade with, and the trust which was committed to them to keep; but they *went away* from them; grew weary of them, and withdrew their neck from that yoke; they deviated from the rule that God had prescribed to them, and betrayed the trust lodged with them; they had revolted from God, not only in worship, but in conversation; they had not kept his ordinances. This disobedience they were chargeable with, and had been guilty of, even from the days of their fathers; either as in the days of their fathers of old, who were sent into captivity for their disobedience; or now for some generations past you are fallen off from what you were, when first you came back out of captivity. Ezra owns it in one particular instance, *since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day,* Ezra ix. 7. Now observe, (1.) What a gracious invitation God gives them to return and repent; *return unto me,* and to your duty, return to your service, return to this legiance, return as a traveller that has missed his way, as a soldier that has run his colours, as a treacherous wife that has gone away from her husband; return thou backsliding Israel, return to me; and then *I will return unto you,* and be reconciled; will remove the judgments you are under, and prevent those you fear. This had been of old the burden of the song, *Zech. i. 3.* and still. (2.) What a peevish answer they return to your all-gracious invitation; but *ye said* with disdain, said it to the prophets that called you, said it to one another, said it to your own hearts, to fill the convictions you were under, you said *wherein shall we return?* Note, God takes notice what returns our hearts make to the calls of his word; what we say, and what we think, when we have heard a sermon; what answer we give to the message sent us: When God calls us to return, we should answer as they did, *Jer. iii. 22. Behold, we come.* But not as these here, *wherein shall we return?* (1.) They take it as an affront to be told of their faults, and called upon to amend them; are ready to say, what ado do these prophets make, about returning and repenting; why are we disgraced and disturbed thus, our own consciences and our neighbours stirred up against us? It is ill with those who thus count reproofs reproaches, and kick against the pricks. (2.) They are so ignorant of themselves, and of the strictness, extent, and spiritual nature of the divine law, that they see nothing in themselves to be repented of or reformed; they are pure in their own eyes, and think they need no repentance. (3.) They are so firmly resolved to go on in sin, that they will find a thousand foolish frivolous excuses to shift off their repentance, and turn away the calls that are given them to repent. They seem to speak only as those that wanted something to say; it is a mere evasion, a banter upon the prophet, and a challenge to him to descend to particulars. Note, Many ruin their own souls, by *buffing* the calls that are given them to repent of their sins.

2. They had robbed their master, and embezzled his goods. They had asked *wherein shall we return?* What have we done amiss? And he soon tells them. Observe,

1. The prophet's high charge exhibited in God's name against the people, the stand indicted for robbery, or sacrilege, the worst of robberies; *ye have robbed me.* And he expostulates with them upon it, *will a man be so daringly impudent as to rob God?* Man that is a weak creature; and cannot contend with God's power; will he think to rob him *ex armis?* Man that lies open to God's knowledge, and cannot conceal himself from that, will he think to rob him *clam & secreto?* Man that depends upon God, and derives his all from him, will he rob him that is his benefactor! This is ungrateful, unjust, and unkind indeed, and very unwise thus to provoke him from whom our judgment proceeds. *Will a man do violence to God?* So some read it; *will a man stint and straiten him?* So others read it. Robbing God is a heinous crime.

2. The people's high challenge in an answer to that charge. *But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee?* They plead not guilty, and put God upon the proof of it. Note, Robbing God is such a heinous crime, that they who are guilty of it, are not willing to own themselves guilty. They rob God, and know not what they do. They rob him of his honour, rob him of that which is devoted to him, to be employed in his service; rob him of themselves, rob him of sabbath-time; rob him of that which is given for the support of religion, and give him not his dues out of their estates; and yet they ask, *wherein have we robbed thee?*

3. The plain proof of the charge, in answer to this challenge; it is in *tithes and offerings.* Out of these the priests and Levites had maintenance for themselves and their families, but they *detained* them, defrauded the priests of them, would not pay their tithes, or not in full, or not of the best, they brought not the offerings which God required, or brought the torn and lame and sick, which was not fit for use. They were all guilty of this sin, even the whole nation, as if they were in confederacy against God, and all combined to rob him of his dues, and to stand by one another in it when they had done. For this they were *curst* with a curse, ver. 9. God punished them with famine and scarcity, through unseasonable weather, or insects that eat up the fruits of the earth. God had thus punished them for neglecting to build the temple, *Hag. i. 10, 11.* and now for not maintaining the temple-service. Note, Those that deny God's part of their estates, may justly expect a curse upon their own part of them. *Ye are curst with a curse* for robbing me, and yet ye go on to do it. Note, It is a great aggravation of sin, when men persist in it, notwithstanding the rebukes of providence they are under for it. Nay, it should seem, because God had punished them with scarcity of bread, they made that a pretence for robbing him; that now they were *impovertised*, they could not afford to bring their tithes and offerings, but must have them, that they might have bread for their families. Note, It argues great perverseness in sin, when men make those afflictions excuses for sin, which are sent to part between them and their sins. When they had but little, they should have done the more good with that little, and that would have been the way to have made it more; but it is ill with the patient, when that which should cure the disease, serves only to palliate it, and prevent its being searched into.

4. An earnest exhortation to reform in this matter; with a promise, that if they did, the judgments they were under should be presently removed.

1. Let them take care to do their duty, ver. 10. *Bring ye all the tithes into the store house.* They had brought some, but, like Ananias and Sapphira,

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had kept back part of the price, pretending they could not spare so much as was required, and necessity has no law; but even necessity must have this law; and it would redress the grievance of their necessity, bring in the full tithes to the utmost that the law requires, *that there may be meat in God's house,* for them that serve at the altar, whether there be meat in your houses or no. Note, God must be served in the first place, and our quota must be contributed to the support of religion in the place where we live, that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom may come, and his will be done, even before we provide our daily bread; for the interest of our souls ought to be preferred before those of our bodies.

2. Let them then trust God to provide for them and their comfort. Let God be first served, and then *prove me herewith saith the Lord of hosts,* whether I will not open the windows of heaven. They said, let God give us our plenty again as formerly, and try us whether we will not then bring him his tithes and offerings, as we did formerly; no, saith God; do you first bring in all your tithes as they become due, and all the arrears of what is past, and try me, whether I will not then restore you your plenty. Note, Those that will deal with God, must deal upon trust, and we may all venture to do so, for, though many have been losers for him, never any were losers by him in the end. It is fit we should venture first, for his reward is with him; but his work is before him; we must first do the work which is our part, and then try him, and trust him for the reward. Elijah put the widow of Zarephath into this method, when he said, *1 Kings xvii. 13. Make me a little cake first,* and then *prove me,* whether there shall not be enough afterwards for thee and thy son. That which discourages people from the expenses of charity, is the weakness of their faith concerning the gains and advantages of charity, they cannot think that they shall get by it, but is a reasonable demand that God here makes, *prove me now;* is any thing to be got by charity? *Come and see;* Nothing venture, nothing win. Trust upon honour.

And you shall find, (1.) That whereas the heavens have been shut up, and there has been no rain, now God will open to you the windows of heaven, for in his hand the key of the clouds is, and you shall have seasonable rain. Or, the expression is figurative, every good gift coming from above, thence God will plentifully pour out upon them the bounties of his providence, very sudden plenty is expressed by *opening the windows of heaven,* 2 Kings vii. 2. We find the windows of heaven opened, to pour down a deluge of wrath in Noah's flood, Gen. vii. 11. But here they are opened to pour down blessings, to that degree, that there should not be room enough to receive them. So plentifully shall their ground bring forth, that they shall be tempted to pull down their barns and build greater for want of room, Luke xii. 18. Or, as Dr. Pocock explains it, "I will pour out on you such a blessing, as shall be not enough only, and such as shall be sufficient, but more and more than enough;" that is, a great addition; the oil that is multiplied shall not stay, as long as there are vessels to receive it, 2 Kings iv. 6. Note, God will not only be reconciled to sinners that repent and reform, but he will be a benefactor, a bountiful benefactor to them. We are never straitened in him, but often straitened in our own bottoms; God has blessings ready to bestow upon us, but, through the weakness of our faith, and narrowness of our desires, we have not room enough to receive them. (2.) That whereas the fruits of their ground had been eaten up by locusts and caterpillars, God would now remove that judgment, ver. 11. *I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,* and will check the progress of those destroying animals, that they shall no more destroy the products of the earth, and the fruits of the trees: God has all creatures at his beck, can command them and remand them at his pleasure. *Neither shall the vine cast her fruits before the time;* it shall not be blasted or blown off. Or, as some read it, *neither shall the devourer make your vine barren,* as the locusts did, Joel i. 7. (3.) That whereas their neighbours and upbraided them with their scarcity, and they had lain under the reproach of famine, which was the more grievous, because their country used to be boasted of for its plenty, now all nations shall call them blessed, shall speak honourably of them, and own them to be a happy people. (4.) That wherein their sin had made their land unpleasing to God, even their temple, and altars, and offerings were so, chap. ii. 13. and whereas his judgments had made their land unpleasant to them, and very melancholy, now *ye shall be a delightful land,* your country shall be acceptable to God, and comfortable to yourselves. Note The reviving religion in a land, will make it indeed a delightful land both to God and to all good people; he will say, it is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; and they will say the same, *Isa. lxii. 4. Deut. xi. 12.* It should seem, this charge to bring in the tithes had its good effect, for we find, *Neh. xiii. 12.* that all Judah did bring in their tithes into the treasures, and no doubt they had the benefit of these promises in the return of their plenty, immediately upon their return to their duty, that they might plainly discern for what cause the evil had been upon them, for when the cause was removed, the evil was removed; and that they may see how perfectly reconciled God was to them upon their repentance; and how their transgression was remembered no more, for the curse was not only taken away, but turned into an abundant blessing.

13. ¶ Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? 14. Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? 15. And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. 16. ¶ Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels: and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. 18. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Among the people of the Jews at this time, though they all enjoyed the same privileges and advantages, yet there were men of very different characters, as ever were and ever will be in the world and in the church, like Jeremiah's figs, some very good, and others very bad; some that plainly appeared to be the children of God, and others that as plainly discovered themselves to be the children of the wicked one; there are tares and wheat in the same field, chaff and corn in the same floor; and here we have an account of both.



1. Here is the *angry notice* God takes of the *impudent, blasphemous talk* of the sinners in Zion, and his just resentments of it. Probably there was a club of them that were in league against religion, that set up for wits, and let their wits on work to run it down and ridicule it, and herein strengthened one another's hands.

Here is, (1.) An indictment found against them, for treasonable words spoken against the King of kings. *Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord.* They spoke against God, in reflexion upon him, in contradiction to him, as their fathers in the wilderness, *Psal. lxxviii. 19. Yea, they spake against God.* What he said, and what he designed they opposed, as if they had been retained of counsel against him and his cause. Their words against God were stout, they came from their pride and haughtiness and contempt of God. What they said against God, they spoke it loudly, as if they cared not who heard them, they were not themselves ashamed to say it, and they desired to propagate their atheistical notions, and to infect the minds of others with them. They spoke it boldly, as those that were resolved to stand to it, and were in no fear of being called to an account. They spoke it proudly, and with insolence and disdain, scorning to be under the divine check and government. They strengthen themselves, they would be valiant against the Almighty, *Job xv. 25.*

(2.) Their plea to this indictment. They said, *What have we spoken so much against thee?* They deny the words, and put the prophet to prove them; or if they spoke the words, they did not design them against God, and therefore will not own there was any harm in them, at least they extenuate the matter, *What have we spoken so much against thee?* So much that there needs all this ado about it. They cannot deny but that they have spoken against God, but they make a light matter of it, and wonder it should be taken notice of; words (say they) are but wind; others have said more, and done worse; if they be not so good as they should be, yet they hope they are not so bad as they are represented to be. Note, It is common for sinners, that are unconvinced and unhumiliated, to deny or extenuate the faults they are justly charged with; and to insist upon their own justification, against the reproofs of the word and of their own consciences. But it will be to no purpose.

(3.) The words themselves they are charged with, God keeps an account of what men say, as well as of what they do, and will let them know that he doth so. We presently forget what we have said, and are ready to deny what we have said amiss, but God can say *ye have said so and so.* They had said it as their deliberate judgment, (1.) That there is nothing to be got in the service of God, though it is a service that subjects men to labour and sorrow. They said, *It is vain to serve God, or He is vain that serveth God, i. e. he labours in vain and to no purpose; he has his labour for his pains, and therefore is a fool for his labour; what profit is that we have kept his ordinance, or his observation?* That we have observed what he has appointed us to observe. *What mammon or wealth have we gained,* saith the Chaldee; intimating (saith Dr. Pocock) that it was for mammon's sake only that they served God, and so indeed not God at all, but mammon. We have walked mournfully, or in black, with great gravity and great grief, before the Lord of hosts, have afflicted our souls at the times appointed for that purpose; and yet we are never the better. Perhaps this comes in as a reason why they would not trust God to prosper them upon their bringing in the tithes, ver. 10. for, say they, we have tried him in other things, and have lost by him; this is a very unjust and unreasonable reflexion upon the service of God, and we can call witnesses enough to confront the slander. (1.) They would have it thought that they had served God, and had kept his ordinances, whereas it was only the external observance of them that they had kept up, while they were perfect strangers to the inward part of the duty, and therefore might say, it is in vain; God saith so, *Mat. xv. 9. In vain do they worship me; whose hearts are far from me, while they draw near with their mouth;* but whose fault is that; not God's, who is the rewarder of them that seek him diligently, but theirs who seek him carelessly. (2.) They insisted much upon it, that they had walked mournfully before God, whereas God had required them to serve him with gladness, and to walk cheerfully before him. They by their own superstitions made the service of God a task and drudgery to themselves, and then complained of it as a hard service. The yoke of Christ is easy; it is the yoke of anti-christ that is heavy. (3.) They complained that they had got nothing by their religion, they were still in poverty and affliction, and behind-hand in the world. This is an old piece of impiety, *Job xxi. 14, 15. What profit shall we have if we pray unto him? Elihu chargeth Job with saying something like this, Job xxxiv. 9. It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.* The enemies of religion do but set up against it the old cavils that have been long since answered and exploded. Perhaps this here refers to the errors of the sect of the Sadducees, which was the scandal of the Jewish church in its latter days; they denied a future state, and then said, it was vain to serve God; which has indeed some colour in it, for if in this life only we had hope in Christ, we were of all men most miserable, *1 Cor. xv. 19.* Note, Those do a great deal of wrong to God's honour, who say that religion is either an unprofitable or an unpleasant thing; for the matter is not so, wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and wisdom's gains better than that of fine gold.

(2.) They maintained that wickedness was the way to prosperity, for they had observed that the workers of wickedness were set up in the world, and they that tempted God were delivered, ver. 15. The outward prosperity of sinners in their sins, as it has weakened the hands of the godly in their godliness, *Psal. lxxiii. 13.* so it has strengthened the hands of the wicked in their wickedness. Note, (1.) They that work wickedness, tempt God by presumptuous sins, they do as it were try God, whether he can and will punish them as he hath said in his word, and in effect challenge him to do his worst, by provoking him in the highest degree. (2.) Those that tempt God by their wicked works, are many times both delivered out of the adversity into which they were justly brought, and advanced to the prosperity which they were utterly unworthy of; they are not only set up once, but when we thought their day was come to fall and they were in trouble, yet they were delivered and set up again; so strangely did providence seem to smile upon them. (3.) Though it be thus, yet it will not warrant us to call the proud happy. For they may be delivered and set up for a while, but it will appear that God resists them, and that their pride is a preface to their fall; and if so, they are truly miserable, and it is folly to call them happy, and to bless them, whom the Lord abhors. Wait awhile and you shall see them that work wickedness set up as a mark to the arrows of God's vengeance, and them that tempt God delivered to the tormenters. Judge of things as they will appear shortly, when the doom of these proud sinners, which follow here, chap. iv. 1. comes to be executed to the utmost.

2. Here is the gracious notice God takes of the pious talk of the saints in Zion, and the gracious recompence of that. Even in this corrupt and degenerate age, when there was so great a decay, nay so great a contempt of serious godliness; yet there were some that retained their integrity and zeal for God; and let us see,

1. How they distinguished themselves, and what their character was: it was the reverse of theirs that spoke so much against God, for, (1.) They feared the Lord, that is the beginning of wisdom, and the root of all religion; they revered the majesty of God, submitted to his authority, and

had a dread of his wrath in all they thought and said, they humbly complied with God, and never spoke any stout words against him. In every age there has been a remnant that feared the Lord, though sometimes but a little remnant. (2.) They thought upon his name, i. e. They seriously considered, and frequently meditated upon the discoveries God has made of himself in his word and by his providences; and their meditation of him is sweet to them and influenceth them. They thought on his name, i. e. They consulted the honour of God, and aimed at that as their ultimate end in all they did. Note, Those that know the name of God, should often think of, and dwell upon it in their thoughts; it is a copious, curious subject, and frequent thoughts of it will contribute very much to our communion with God, and the stirring up of our devout affections to him. (3.) They spoke often one to another, concerning the God they feared, and that name of his which they thought so much of, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak; and a good man, out of a good treasure there will bring forth good things. They that feared the Lord, kept together as those that were company for each other; they spoke kindly and endearingly one to another, for the preserving and promoting of mutual love, that that might not wax cold, when iniquity did thus abound. They spoke knowingly and edifyingly to one another, for the increasing and improving of faith and holiness; they spoke one to another in the language of them that fear the Lord and think on his name, the language of Canaan: when profaneness was come to so great a height, as to trample upon all that is sacred, when they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another; (1.) Then when iniquity was bold and barefaced, the people of God took courage and stirred themselves, the innocent against the hypocrite, *Job xvii. 8.* The worse others are, the better we should be; when vice is daring, let not virtue be sneaking. (2.) Then when religion was reproached and misrepresented, its friends did all they could to support the credit of it, and to keep it in countenance. It had been suggested, that the ways of God are melancholy unpleasant ways, solitary and sorrowful, and therefore then they that feared God studied to evidence the contrary, by their cheerfulness in mutual love and converse; that they might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. (3.) Then when seducers were busy to deceive, and to possess unwary souls with prejudices against religion, they that feared God were industrious to arm themselves and one another against the contagion, by mutual instructions, excitements and encouragements; and to strengthen one another's hands. As evil communication corrupts good minds and manners, so good communication confirms them.

2. How God dignified them, and what farther honour and favour he intended for them. They who spoke stoutly against God, no doubt looked with disdain and displeasure upon those that feared him, heeded and bantered them; but they had little reason to regard that, or to be disturbed at it, when God countenanced them.

1. He took notice of their pious discourses, and was graciously present at their conferences; the Lord hearkened and heard it, and was well pleased with it. God saith, *Jer. viii. 6.* that he hearkened and heard what bad men would say, and they spoke not right; here he hearkened and heard what good men did say, for they spoke aright. Note, The gracious God observes all the gracious words that proceed out of the mouths of his people; they need not desire that men may hear them and commend them; let them not seek praise from men by them, nor affect to be taken notice of by them, but let it content them, that be the conference never so private, God sees and hears in secret, and will reward openly. When the two disciples going to Emmaus were discoursing concerning Christ, he hearkened and heard, and joined himself to them, and made a third, *Luke xxiv. 15.*

2. He kept an account of them. A book of remembrance was written before him. Not that the eternal mind needs to be minded of things by books and writings, but it is an expression after the manner of men, intimating that their pious affections and performances are kept in remembrance, as punctually and particularly as if they were written in a book; as if journals were kept of all their conferences. Great kings had books of remembrance written, and read before them, in which were entered all the services done them, when, and by whom, as *Ezra ii. 23.* God in like manner remembers the services of his people, that in the review of them he may say, *Well done, and enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* God has a book for the sighs and tears of his mourners, *Psal. lvi. 8.* much more for the pleadings of his advocates. Never was any good word spoken of God, or for God, from an honest heart, but it was registered, that it might be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, and in no wise lose its reward.

3. He promiseth them a share in his glory hereafter, ver. 17. They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels. When God utterly cuts off the Jewish church and nation for their infidelity, the remnant among them that believed his word, and having waited for the consolation of Israel, welcome him when he comes, shall be admitted into the Christian church, and shall become a peculiar people to God; God will take care of them, that they perish not with them that believe not; but that they be hid in the day of the Lord's anger against that nation. They shall be my jewels, my peculiar treasure, (it is the word used, *Ezra. xiv. 5.*) in the day when I make or do, what I have said and designed to do, so some read it. These pious ones shall have all the glorious privileges of God's Israel appropriated to them, and centering in them; they shall now be the peculiar treasure, when the rest are rejected; they shall now be the vessels of mercy and honour, when the rest are made vessels of wrath and dishonour, vessels in which is no pleasure. This may be applied to all the faithful people of God, and the distinction he will put between them and others in the great day. Note, 1. The saints are God's jewels, they are highly esteemed of by him, and are dear to him, they are comely with the comeliness that he puts upon them, and he is pleased to glory in them, they are a royal diadem in his hand, *Isa. lxii. 3.* He looks upon them as his own proper goods, his choice goods, his treasure, laid up in his cabinet, and the furniture of his closet, *Psal. cxxxv. 4.* The rest of the world is but lumber in comparison with them. 2. There is a day coming when God will make up his jewels; they shall be gathered up out of the dirt into which they are now thrown, and gathered together from all the places to which they are now scattered; he shall send forth his angels to gather his elect, that are his jewels, from the four winds of heaven, *Mat. xxiv. 31.* to gather his jewels into his jewel-house, as the wheat from several fields into the barn. All the saints will then be gathered to Christ, and none but saints, and saints made perfect; then God's jewels will be made up, as stones into a crown, as stars into a constellation. 3. Those who now own God for theirs; he will then own them for his, will publicly confess them before angels and men. They shall be mine, their sanctification shall be completed, and so they shall be perfectly and entirely mine, without any remaining interests of the world and the flesh: Their relation to God shall be acknowledged, and his propriety in them; he will separate them from those that are not his; and give them their portion with those that are his; for to them it shall be said, *Come ye, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.* They were in doubt sometimes, whether they were belonging to God or no, but the matter shall then be put out of doubt, God himself will say unto them, *you are mine;* now, their relation to God is what they are reproached with, but it will then be gloried in, God himself will glory in it.



4. He promiseth them a share in his grace now. *I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serves him.* God had promised to own them as his, and take them to be with him, but it might be a discouragement to them, to think that they had offended God, and he might justly disown them and cast them off; but as to that he saith, *I will spare them.* I will not deal with them as they deserve. *I will rejoice over them,* so some expound it, as the bridegroom over his bride, *Isa. lxii. 5. Zeph. iii. 17.* But the word usually signifies to spare with commiseration and compassion, as a father pities his children, *Plalm ciii. 13.* Note, 1. It is our duty to serve God with the disposition of children; we must be as sons, must by a new birth partake of a divine nature, must consent to the covenant of adoption, and partake of the spirit of adoption; and we must be his servants; God will not have his children trained up in idleness, they must do him service, and they must do it from a principle of love, with cheerfulness and delight, and as those that are therein serving their own true interest, and this is serving as a son with the father, *Phil. ii. 22.* (2.) If we serve God with the disposition of children, he will spare us with the tenderness and compassion of a father. Even God's children that serve him, stand in need of sparing mercy, that mercy to which we owe it that we are not consumed, that mercy which keeps out of hell. *Nehemiah*, when he had done much good, yet knowing there is not a just man on earth that doth good and sins not, and that every sin deserves God's wrath, prays, *Lord, spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy,* see *Neh. xiii. 22.* And God as a father will shew them this mercy. He will not be extreme to mark what we do amiss, but will make the best of us and our poor performances; will mitigate the afflictions his children are exercised with, and save them from the ruin they deserve. The father continues to spare the son, and doth it with complacency, because he is his own: thus God will spare humble penitents and petitioners, as a man spares his son that serves him, though we do him so little service, nay though we do him so much disservice.

3. How they will thus be distinguished from the children of this world, *ver. 28.* Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between sinners and saints; between those that serve God, and make conscience of their duty to him, and those that serve him not, but put contempt upon his service. You that now speak against God as making no difference between good and bad, and therefore say it is in vain to serve him, *ver. 14.* you shall be made to see your error; you that would speak for God, but know not what to say as to this, that there seems to be one event to the righteous and to the wicked, and all things come alike to all, will then have the matter set in a true light, and will see to your everlasting satisfaction the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Then ye shall return, i. e. you shall change your mind, and come to a right understanding of the thing. This primarily respects the manifest difference that was made by the divine providence between the believing Jews, and those that persisted in their infidelity at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation by the Romans! But it is to have its full accomplishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ, and that great discriminating day, when it shall be easy enough to discern between the righteous and the wicked. Note, (1.) All the children of men are either righteous or wicked, either such as serve God, or such as serve him not. This is that division of the children of men which will last for ever, and by which their eternal state will be determined; all are going either to heaven or hell. 2. In this world it is many times hard to discern between the righteous and the wicked, they are mingled together, good fish and bad in the same net, the righteous are so dissembled, and the wicked so disguised, that we are often deceived in our opinions concerning both the one and the other; there are many that we think serve God, who having not their hearts right with him, will be found none of his servants; and on the other hand, many will be found his faithful servants, who because they followed not with us, we thought did not serve him; but that which especially raised the difficulty here was, that the divine providence seemed to make no difference between the righteous and the wicked, you could not know wicked men by God's frowning upon them, for they commonly prospered in the world, nor righteous men by his smiling upon them, for they were involved with others in the same common calamity; none now knows God's love or hatred by all that is before him, *Ecc. ix. 1.* (3.) At the bar of Christ in the last judgment, it will be easy to discern between the righteous and the wicked; for then every man's character will be both perfected, and perfectly discovered, every man will then appear in his true colours, and his disguises will be taken off; some men's sins indeed go beforehand, and you may now tell who is wicked, but others follow after, however in the great day we shall see who was righteous, and who wicked. Every man's condition likewise will be both perfectly and everlastingly determined, the righteous will then be perfectly happy, and the wicked perfectly miserable, without mixture or alloy; when the righteous are all set on the right-hand of Christ, and invited to come for a blessing, and all the wicked on his left-hand and are bid to depart with a curse, then it will be easy to discern between them. As to ourselves therefore we are concerned to think among which we shall have our lot, and as to others must judge nothing before the time.

## C H A P. IV.

We have here proper instructions given us (very proper to close the canon of the Old Testament with). (1.) Concerning the state of recompence and retribution that is before us; the misery of the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous in that state, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* And this is represented to us under a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the unbelieving Jews with it, and of the comforts and triumphs of those among them that received the gospel. (2.) Concerning the state of trial and preparation we are now in, in which we are directed to have an eye to divine revelation, and to follow that; they then must stick to the law of Moses, *ver. 4.* and expect further discovery of God's will by *Elijah* the prophet, i. e. by John Baptist, the harbinger of the Messiah, *ver. 5, 6.* The last chapter of the New Testament is much to the same purpose, setting before us heaven and hell in the other world, and obliging us to adhere to the word of God in this world.

1. **F**OR, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. 2. ¶ But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. 3. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

The great and terrible day of the Lord is here prophesied of; which, like the pillar of cloud and fire, shall have a dark side turned towards the Egyptians that fight against God, and a bright side towards the faithful Israelites that follow him. The day cometh, i. e. the Lord cometh, the day of the Lord; and it hath reference both to the first and to the second coming of Jesus Christ; the day of both was fixed, and should answer the character here given of it.

1. In both Christ is a consuming fire to those that rebel against him. The day of his coming shall burn as an oven; it shall be a day of wrath, of fiery indignation. This was foretold concerning the Messiah, *Psal. xxi. 9.* Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, and shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger; it will be a day of terror and destruction like the burning of a city, or rather of a wood, the trees whereof are withered and dried, for to that the allusion seems to be, as *Isa. x. 17, 18.* The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his holy One for a flame, and it shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field. Now observe here, (1.) Who shall be fuel to this fire; all the proud in heart, whose words have been stout against God, and their necks stiff, and unapt to yield to the yoke of his commandments. All those that in the pride of their countenances will not seek after God, nor submit to the grace and government of Jesus Christ; all that proudly say, they will not have Christ to reign over them. And all those that do wickedly in their affections and conversations, that wilfully persist in sin, in contempt and contradiction to the law of God; they are such as do wickedly against the covenant, as another prophet had lately expressed it, *Dan. xi. 32.* God that has a perfect knowledge of every one's character, knows who are the proud, and of every one's actions, knows who they are that do wickedly; and they shall be as stubble to this fire, they shall be consumed by it, easily consumed, utterly consumed, and it is wholly long of themselves that they shall be so, for they make themselves stubble, i. e. combustible matter to this fire. If they were not stubble, it would not burn them; for the fire will be to every man according as he and his works are found; if they be wood, hay, and stubble, they will be consumed; but if they be gold, silver, and precious stones, they will abide the fire, and be purified by it, *1 Cor. iii. 13, 14, 15.* They that by their unbelief oppose Christ, thereby set themselves as briars and thorns before a devouring fire, *Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.*

(2.) What shall be the force, and what the fruit of this fire? The day that cometh shall burn them up, shall both terrify and ruin them, and shall leave them neither root nor branch, neither son nor nephew, so the Chaldee paraphrase; neither they nor their posterity shall be spared; they shall be wholly extirpated and cut off. Who knows the power of God's anger; The proud and those that do wickedly will not fear it, but they shall be made to feel it. Where are they now that called the proud happy? when thus they are made completely miserable; when there remains no branch of their happiness to be enjoyed for the present, nor any root of it out of which it might again spring up.

Now this was fulfilled, (1.) When Christ in his doctrine spoke terror and condemnation to the proud Pharisees, and other the Jews that did wickedly. When he sent that fire on the earth, which burnt up the chaff of the tradition of the elders, and the corrupt glosses they had put upon the law of God. (2.) When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the nation of the Jews, as a nation, quite blotted out from under heaven, and neither root nor branch left them. This seems to be principally intended here; our Saviour saith, that those should be the days of vengeance, when all the things that were written to that purpose should be fulfilled, *Luke xxi. 22.* Then the unbelieving Jews were as stubble to the devouring fire of God's judgments, which gathered together to them as the eagles to the carcase. (3.) It is certainly applicable, and is to be applied to the day of judgment, both to the particular judgment at death, (some of the Jewish doctors refer it to the punishment that seizeth on the souls of the wicked immediately after they go out of the body) but especially it will have its accomplishment in the general judgment, at the end of time; when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire, to execute judgment on the proud, and all that do wickedly; the whole world shall then burn as an oven, and all the children of this world, that set their hearts upon it, and choose their portion in it, shall take their ruin with it, and the fire then kindled shall never be quenched.

2. In both Christ is a rejoicing light to those that serve him faithfully, to those that fear his name and give him the glory due to it, *ver. 2.* who stand in awe of that name of his, which the wicked profane and trample upon. Here is mercy and comfort kept in store for all those that fear the Lord and think on his name. Observe,

1. When this mercy and comfort shall flow to them. To you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. The day that comes, as it will be a stormy day to the wicked, a day in which God will rain upon them fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, as he did on Sodom, *Psal. xi. 6.* a day of clouds and of thick darkness, *Amos v. 18, 20.* so it will be a fair and bright day to those that fear God, and reviving as the rising sun is to the earth, and particular notice is taken of the rising of the sun upon Zoar, when that was mercifully distinguished from the cities of the plain whom the fire consumed, see *Gen. xix. 23.* so, to you that fear God is comfort spoken, when the hearts of others fail for fear, let them lift up their heads for joy, for their redemption draws nigh, *Luke xxi. 28.* But by the sun of righteousness here we are certainly to understand Jesus Christ, who would undertake to secure the believing remnant in the day of the general destruction of the Jews, from falling with the rest, and to comfort them in that day of distress and perplexity with his consolations; he directed them that were in Judea to flee to the mountains, *Mat. xxiv. 16.* and they did so, and were all safe and easy in Pella. But it is to be applied more generally, (1.) To the coming of Christ in the flesh to seek and save them that were lost; then the sun of righteousness, arose upon this dark world. Christ is the light of the world, the true light, the great light that makes day, and rules the day, *John viii. 12.* as the sun; he is the light of men, *John i. 4.* is to men's souls as the sun is to the visible world, which without the sun would be a dungeon, so would mankind be darkness itself without the light of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ. Christ is the sun that has light in himself, and is the fountain of light, *Psal. xix. 4, 5, 6.* he is the sun of righteousness, for he himself is a righteous Saviour; righteousness is both the light and the heat of this sun, the word of his righteousness is so, it guides, instructs, and quickens; so is the everlasting righteousness he has brought in; he is made of God to us righteousness, he is the Lord our righteousness, and therefore is truly called the sun of righteousness; through him we are justified, and so sanctified, and are brought to see light. This sun of righteousness in the fulness of time arose upon the world, and with him light came into the world, *John iii. 19.* a great light, *Mat. iv. 16.* In him the day-spring from on high visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, *Luke i. 78, 79.* Righteousness sometimes signifies mercy or benignity, and it was in Christ that the tender mercy of our God visited us. (2.) It is applicable to the graces and comforts of the holy Spirit brought into the souls of men. Grotius understands it of Christ's giving the Spirit to those that are his, to shine in their hearts, and to be a comforter to them, a sun and a shield. Those that are possessed and governed by a holy fear of God, and a dread of his majesty, shall



shall have his love also shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and then the sun may be said to arise there, and to bring both a delightful day, and a fruitful spring along with it. (2.) Christ's second coming will be a glorious and welcome sun-rising to all that fear his name; it will be that morning of the resurrection, in which the upright shall have dominion, Psalm xlix. 14. That day which to the wicked will burn as an oven, will to the righteous be bright as the morning, and it is what they wait for, more than they that wait for the morning.

2. What this mercy and comfort shall bring with it to them. He shall arise with healing under his wings, or in his rays or beams, which are as the wings of the sun; Christ came as the sun to bring not only light to a dark world, but health to a diseased distempered world; the Jews, (saith Dr. Pocock) have a proverbial saying, *As the sun riseth, infirmities decrease*; the flowers which dropped and languished all night, revive in the morning. Christ came into the world to be the great physician, yea, and the great medicine too, both the balm in Gilead and the physician there; when he was upon earth he went about as the sun in his circuit, doing this good, he healed all manner of sicknesses and diseases among the people; he healed by wholesale as the sun doth; he shall arise with healing in his skirts; so some read it, and they apply to it the story of the woman's touching the hem of his garment, and being thereby made whole, and his finding that virtue went out of him, Mark v. 28, 29, 30. But his healing bodily diseases was a specimen of his great design in coming into the world to heal the diseases of men's souls, and to put them into a good state of health, that they may serve and enjoy both God and themselves.

3. What good effect it shall have upon them.

1. It shall make them vigorous in themselves. *Ye shall go forth*, as those that are healed go abroad, and return to their business. The souls shall go forth out of their bodies at death, and the bodies out of their graves at the resurrection, as prisoners out of their dungeons, and both to see the light, and be set at liberty. *Ye shall go forth* as plants out of the earth, when in the spring the sun returns. Some make it to mean the going forth of the Christians from Jerusalem, and the escape they thereby made from its destruction. And thus the souls on whom the sun of righteousness ariseth go forth out of this world, go forth out of Babylon, as those that are made free indeed. *Ye shall likewise grow up*, being restored to health and liberty ye shall increase in knowledge and grace, and spiritual strength. The souls on which the sun of righteousness riseth are growing up towards the perfect man; those that by the grace of God are made wise and good, by the same grace are made wiser and better; and their path, like that of the rising sun, shines more and more to the perfect day, Prov. iv. 18. Their growth is compared to that of the calves of the stall, which is a quick, strong, and useful growth. *Ye shall grow up*, not as the flower of the field, which is slender and weak, and of little use, and withereth soon after it is grown up, but as the calves of the stall, that, as one of the rabbins expounds it, *grow great in flesh and fatness*, with which both God's altars and men's tables are replenished; so the growth of the saints, on whom the sun of righteousness ariseth, honours both God and man. Some read it, instead of *ye shall grow up*, *ye shall move yourselves, or leap for joy*, shall be as frolicksome as calves of the stall, when they are let loose in the open field; and it notes the joy of the saints, that rejoice in Christ Jesus; they shall even leap for joy; are always caused to triumph.

2. It shall make them victorious over their enemies, ver. 9. *Ye shall tread down the wicked*. Time was when the wicked trod them down, said to their souls, *bow down that we may go over*, but the day will come when they shall tread down the wicked; being made Christ's footstool, they are made theirs; Psalm cx. 1. and come and worship before the feet of the church, Rev. iii. 9. *The elder shall serve the younger*. When believers by faith overcome the world, when they suppress their own corrupt appetites and passions, when the God of peace bruise Satan under their feet, then they tread down the wicked. When it came to the turn of the Christians to triumph over the Jews that had insulted over them, then this promise was fulfilled; *they shall be as ashes under the soles of your feet*, they shall not only be trodden down, but trodden to dirt. When the day that comes shall have burnt them up, they shall trample upon them as ashes; when the righteous shall rise to everlasting life, the wicked shall rise to everlasting contempt; and though they shall not triumph over them; they shall triumph in that God, whose justice is gloried in their destruction. The saints in glory are said to have power given them over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron, Rev. ii. 26, 27. *This ye shall do, in the day that I shall do this*. Note, The saints triumphs are all owing to God's victories; it is not they that do this, but God that doth it for them; that faith, *Come, sit your feet on the necks of these kings*. Some read it, *in the day that I make, or shall make: the great day that I shall make remarkable*, of which you will say with joy, *This is the day that the Lord has made*; the day of the destruction of Jerusalem is called the great and terrible day of the Lord, Acts ii. 20. and our Saviour in foretelling that destruction made use of such expressions, as like these here might be applied likewise to the end of the world and the last judgment; for it was such a terrible revelation of the wrath of God from heaven, and caused such a scene of horror upon this earth, as that it might fitly serve for a type of that glorious transaction which will be an outlet to the days of time, and an inlet to the days of eternity; and by the accomplishment of these prophecies in the ruin of the Jewish nation, we should have our faith confirmed in the assurances Christ has given us concerning the dissolution of all things; *surely I come quickly*, to faith Christ the Lord of hosts, to whom all power in heaven and earth is committed.

4. ¶ Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. 5. ¶ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: 6. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and imite the earth with a curse.

This is doubtless intended for a solemn conclusion not only of this prophecy, but of the canon of the Old Testament, and is a plain information that they were not to expect any more sayings or writings by divine inspiration, no more of the dictates of the Spirit of prophecy, till the beginning of the gospel of the Messiah; which sets aside the Apocrypha as no part of the holy writ, and which therefore the Jews never received.

Now prophecy ceaseth, and is about to be sealed up, there are two things required of the people of God that lived then.

1. They must keep up an obedient veneration for the law of Moses, ver. 4. *Remember ye the law of Moses my servant*, and observe to do according to it, even that law which I commanded unto him in Horeb; that fiery law, which was intended for all Israel with the statutes and judgments, not only the law of the Ten Commandments, but all the other appointments ceremonial

and judicial then and there given. Observe here, (1.) The honourable mention that is made of Moses, the first writer of the Old Testament, in Malachi the last writer: God by him calls him *Moses my servant*, for the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. See now the penmen of scripture, though they lived in several ages at a great distance from each other, (it was above one thousand two hundred years from Moses to Malachi) all concurred in the same thing, and supported one another, being all acted and guided by one and the same Spirit. (2.) The honourable mention that is made of the law of Moses; it was what God himself commanded, he owns it for his law, and he commanded it for all Israel, as the municipal law of their kingdom. Thus will God magnify his law, and make it honourable. Note, We are therefore concerned to keep the law, because God has commanded it, and commanded it for us, for we are the spiritual Israel; and if we expect the benefit of the covenant with Israel, Heb. viii. 10. we must observe the commands given to Israel, those of them that were intended to be of perpetual obligation. (3.) The summary of our duty, with reference to the law; we must remember it. Forgetfulness of the law is at the bottom of all our transgressions of it; if we would rightly remember it, we could not but conform to it; remember it when we have occasion to use it; remember both the commands themselves, and the sanctions wherewith they are enforced. The office of conscience is to bid us remember the law.

But how doth this charge, to remember the law of Moses, come in here? (1.) This prophet had reproved them for many gross corruptions and irregularities both in worship and conversation, and now for the reforming and amending of what was amiss, he only chargeth them to remember the law of Moses; keep to that rule, and you will do all you should do. He will lay upon them no other burden, but what they have received, hold that fast, Rev. ii. 24, 25. Note, Corrupt churches are to be reformed by the written word, and reduced into order by being reduced to the standard of the law and the testimony, see 1 Cor. xi. 23. (2.) The church had long enjoyed the benefit of prophets, extraordinary messengers from God, and now they had a whole book of their prophecies put together, and it was a finished piece, but they must not think that hereby the law of Moses was superseded, and was become as an almanack out of date, as if now they were advanced to a higher form, and might forget that; no, the prophets do but confirm and apply the law, and press the observance of that, and therefore still remember the law. Note, Even when we have made considerable advances in knowledge, yet still we must retain the first principles of practical religion, and resolve to abide by them. Those that study the writings of the prophets, and apocalypse, must still remember the law of Moses and the four gospels. (5.) Prophecy was now to cease in the church for some ages, and the Spirit of prophecy not to return till the beginning of the gospel, and now they are bid to remember the law of Moses, let them live by the rules of that, and live upon the promises of that. Note, We need not complain for want of visions and revelations, as long as we have the written word and the canon of scripture complete, to be our guide; for that is the most sure word of prophecy, and the touchstone by which we are to try the spirit. Though we have no prophets, yet as long as we have Bibles we may keep our communion with God, and keep ourselves in his way. (4.) They were to expect the coming of the Messiah, and the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom, and in that expectation they must remember the law of Moses, and live in obedience to that, and then they might expect the comforts that the Messiah would bring to the willing and obedient. Let them observe the law of Moses, and live up to the light which that gave them, and then they might expect the benefit of the gospel of Christ, for to him that has, and useth what he has well, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance.

2. They must keep up a believing expectation of the gospel of Christ, and must look for the beginning of it in the appearing of Elijah the prophet, ver. 5, 6. *Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet*. Though the Spirit of prophecy cease for a time, and you will have only the law to consult, yet it shall revive again in one that shall be sent in the spirit and power of Elias, Luke i. 17. *The law and the prophets were until John*, Luke xvi. 16. they continued to be the only lights of the church till that morning-star appeared. Note, As God never left himself without witness in the world, so neither in the church, but as there was occasion carried the light of divine revelation further and further to the perfect day. They had now Moses and the prophets, and might hear them, but God will go further, he will send them Elijah. Observe,

1. Who this prophet is that shall be sent; it is Elijah; the Jewish doctors will have it to be the same Elijah that prophesied in Israel in the days of Ahab, that he shall come again to be the forerunner of the Messiah; yet others of them say not the same person, but another of the same spirit; it should seem those different sentiments they had when they asked John, *Art thou Elias?* or that prophet that should bear his name? John i. 19, 20. But we Christians know very well, that John Baptist was the Elias that was to come, Matt. xvii. 9—13. and very expressly, Matt. xi. 14. *This is Elias which was for to come*; and ver. 10. the same of whom it is written, *Behold, I send my messenger*, Mal. iii. 1. Elijah was a man of great austerity and mortification, zealous for God, bold in reproving sin, and active to reduce an apostate people to God and their duty, and John Baptist was animated by the same spirit and power, and preached repentance and reformation as Elias had done; and all held him for a prophet, as they did Elijah in his day, and that his baptism was from heaven, and not of men. Note, When God hath such work to do, as was formerly to be done, he can raise up such men to do it, as he formerly raised up, and can put into a John Baptist the spirit of an Elias.

2. When he shall be sent; before the appearing of the Messiah, which because it was the judgment of this world, and introduced the ruin of the Jewish church and nation, is here called the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and this John Baptist gave them fair warning of, when he told them of the wrath to come, that wrath to the uttermost, which was hastening upon them, and put them into a way of escape from it, and of the fan in Christ's hand, with which Christ would thoroughly purge his floor; see Matt. iii. 7—10—12. That day of Christ when he came first, was as that day will be when he comes again, though a great and joyful day to those that embrace him, yet a great and dreadful day to those that oppose him. John Baptist was sent before the coming of this day, to give people notice of it, that they might get ready for it, and go forth to meet it.

3. On what errand he shall be sent. He shall turn the heart of the fathers to their children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, i. e. He shall be employed in this work, he shall endeavour it, his doctrine and baptism shall have a direct tendency to it, and with many shall be successful: He shall be an instrument in God's hand, of turning many to righteousness, to the Lord their God, and so making ready a people prepared for him, Luke i. 16, 17. Note, The turning of souls to God and their duty is the best preparation of them for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. It is promised concerning John, (1.) That he shall give a turn to things; shall make a bold stand against the strong torrent and long current of sin and impiety, which he found in full force among the children of his people and bearing down all before it. This is called his coming to reform all things,



things, Matt. xvii. 11. to set them to rights, that they may again go in the right channel. (2.) That he shall preach a doctrine that shall reach men's hearts, and have an influence upon them, and work a change in them. God's word in his mouth shall be *quick and powerful*, and a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*; many had their consciences awakened by his ministry, that yet were not thoroughly wrought upon, such a spirit and power was there in it. (3.) That he shall turn the hearts of the fathers *with the children*, and of the children *with the fathers*, (for so some read it) to God and to their duty; he shall call upon young and old to repent, and shall not labour in vain, for many of the fathers that are going off, and many of the children that are growing up, shall be wrought upon by his ministry. (4.) That thus he shall be an instrument to revive and confirm love and unity among relations, and shall *bring* them closer, and *bind* them faster to each other, by *bringing* and *binding* them all to their God. He shall prepare the way for that kingdom of heaven, which will make all its faithful subjects of *one heart and one soul*, Acts iv. 32. which will be a kingdom of love, and will slay all enmities.

4. With *what view* he shall be sent on this errand, *lest I come and smite the earth*, i. e. the land of Israel, the body of the Jewish nation, that were of the earth earthy, *with a curse*. They by their impiety and impenitence in it had laid themselves open to the curse of God, which is a *separation to*

*all evil*. God was ready to *smite* them with that *curse*, to bring utter ruin upon them, to *strike home*, to *strike dead* with the curse; but he will yet once more try them, whether they will repent and return, and so prevent it; and therefore sends John Baptist to preach repentance to them, that their conversion might prevent their confusion; so unwilling is God that any should perish, so willing to have his anger turned away; had they universally repented and reformed, it had had this desired effect; but they generally rejecting the counsel of God in John's baptism, it proved *against themselves*, Luke vii. 30. and their *land* was *smitten* with the *curse*, which both it and they lie under to this day. Note, Those must expect to be smitten with a sword, with a curse, who *turn not to him that smiteth them* with a rod, with a cross, *Isa. ix. 13*. Now the *ax is laid to the root of the tree*, saith John Baptist, and it is ready to be smitten, to be cut down *with a curse*, therefore *bring forth fruit meet for repentance*. Some observe that the last word of the Old Testament is a *curse*, which threatens *the earth*, Zech. v. 3. which we must be made sensible of our danger of, that we may bid Christ welcome who comes with a blessing; and it is with a blessing, with the choicest of blessings, that the New Testament ends, and *with it let us arm ourselves*, or rather let God arm us against this curse. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.*

THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

